

THE RELATIONAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL
PNEUMATOLOGY OF JAMES E. LODER : PROVIDING NEW
FRAMEWORKS FOR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Kenneth Edward Kovacs

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Providing New Frameworks for the Christian Life**

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**Dissertation Submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

**University of St. Andrews
St. Andrews, Scotland**

23rd September 2002



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23rd September 2002

I was admitted as a research student in October, 1991 and as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in June, 1995; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St. Andrews between 1995 and 2002.

23rd September 2002

I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of St. Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

2 October 2002

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ABSTRACT

The Relational Phenomenological Pneumatology of James E. Loder: Providing New Frameworks for the Christian Life

The theological writings of James E. Loder, Jr. (1931-2001) require a wider audience. For more than forty years he developed and exercised an interdisciplinary methodology that identified patterns of correlation in the fields of psychology, educational theory, phenomenology, epistemology, and physics producing a powerful theological vision that centers around the person and work of the Holy Spirit engaging and transforming human life. At his untimely death in November, 2001, Loder was the Mary D. Synnott Professor of the Philosophy of Christian Education at the Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey (U. S. A.), where he lectured primarily in the areas of human development and the philosophy of education. If Loder is known at all, he is recognized for his work in the area of practical theology, especially among church educators. Even in the discipline of practical theology his work is largely unknown and has yet to receive the recognition it deserves from systematic theologians, biblical scholars, as well as clergy and laity. It is my hope to help change this.

The purpose of this thesis is to introduce and examine, explore and decipher the complexity of Loder's thought in order to make it more accessible to a wider public. This important task is done in service to the broader goal of demonstrating that Loder's work, particularly his pneumatology,, is of inestimable value to the discipline of theology and theology's service to the work of the church. At the core of Loder's work is an epistemological, psycho-spiritual framework that I characterize as a *relational phenomenological pneumatology*. The Christian life is preeminently relational, distinguished by a relationship with God constituted by Jesus Christ, and sustained by the Holy Spirit. The relation, Loder claims, takes place in and through the life of the Holy Spirit who operates within a complementary relationship with the human spirit, in what he describes as the *analogia spiritus*: an intimate, transformational interrelation of the Holy Spirit and the human spirit. The Holy Spirit, intimately connected to the person and work of Christ, takes up and extends the work begun in the incarnation by enfleshing the presence of Christ in the life of an individual in ways that are transformationally Christomorphic. What makes Loder's work unique is the way he articulates a theology of the Holy Spirit that incorporates a firm grasp of the way the self participates in and comes to have a knowledge of itself, the world, and God. It is precisely the logic of this dynamic, I would argue, that has extraordinary implications for the way we articulate the Christian experience. My thesis, therefore, is that Loder's relational phenomenological pneumatology contains rich and principally unrecognized resources for providing new frameworks for the Christian life.

Dedicated to those I lost along the way:

My mother, Grace Morrow Kovacs
(1931-1992)

My mentor, the Reverend Doctor Ansley Gerard VanDyke
(1918-1994)

My teacher, the Reverend Doctor George B. Hall
(1932-1995)

My cousin, Helen Margaret Morrow
(1928-1997)

My grandmother, Ann Kay Schmidl
(1908-2000)

My ánam cara, the Reverend Doctor James Edwin Loder, Jr.
(1931-2001)

*Rest eternal grant them, O Lord;
and let light perpetual shine upon them.*

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For the last ten years I have been living with the questions and themes of this dissertation, beginning as a Master of Philosophy postgraduate and then moving into the Doctor of Philosophy degree program. Many people have lived through this experience with me. The last few years have been difficult ones. Trying to balance full-time parish ministry and part-time doctoral research has not always been easy. I am grateful to all those who helped me in a myriad of ways, providing strength, urging me to see this through to completion, and sustaining me with prayer. But I would like to direct a special tribute of thanks to following people.

I am thankful to Princeton Theological Seminary and its president, Thomas W. Gillespie. At Commencement from the Seminary, I received the Graduate Study Fellowship in Parish Pulpit Ministry that brought me to the University of St. Andrews. Dr. Gillespie's untiring call for critical theological reflection in the parish motivated me to finish this work. I am thankful to the Reverend Lawson and Sheila Brown and Robert and Margaret Murray of St. Andrews who opened their homes and their lives to me. Their friendship and love over the years have blessed me in countless ways. I am grateful to the women, men, and children of three very special congregations: St. Leonard's and Cameron Parish Churches, St. Andrews, Scotland; the First Presbyterian (Hilltop) Church of Mendham, New Jersey; and the Catonsville Presbyterian Church, Catonsville, Maryland (U. S. A.). These faithful communities provided time away to write, as well as considerable emotional support, intellectual stimulation and a substantial amount of love.

This work began under the tutelage of the late George Hall. I will always be thankful for what I learned from him, and fondly remember the times spent smoking our pipes and waxing theological. From the start, Dr. Hall was interested in my topic due to his own concern for theology's engagement with questions relating to history and human existence. Except for a brief time when Dr. Esther Reed was my supervisor, the bulk of the writing and direction of the dissertation was under the guidance of Professor Trevor Hart. I am thankful for Dr. Reed's comments and suggestions regarding the direction of my thesis. It is to Dr. Hart that I owe a debt of gratitude for his advocacy and encouragement. His theological acumen stimulated and challenged my thinking. His great love for the ministry of the church, especially the way theology gives life to the church, helped to strengthen the effectiveness of my ministry. I am also grateful for the friendship of Dr. Dana Wright of Princeton Theological Seminary whose great love for Loder's work has been an inspiration in my own exploration of his ideas.

Finally, I am thankful to James E. Loder. In his charge to me at my ordination in 1990, based on Matthew's account of the Transfiguration, Loder urged me to remember that Jesus will transfigure our lives when we, "Listen to him." Everything depends upon the intimacy of the relationship. The deep conviction and "happy passion" of Loder's faith, his remarkable insights into the nature of human existence before a gracious God revealed in the face of Jesus Christ, and his inexorable trust in the transforming work of the Holy Spirit have shaped both my life and my ministry more than anyone else. His death last year has left a huge void in my life. Regarding Jim, I echo Dietrich Bonhoeffer's tribute to Adolf von Harnack who said: "That I was his student for a time is but a passing thing, that I am his pupil remains always." *Soli Deo Gloria.*

Baltimore, Maryland
23rd September 2002
Twelfth Anniversary of My Ordination

Kenneth E. Kovacs

ABBREVIATIONS

Loder's major works will be referred to in the following way:

- NRC*** "The Nature of Religious Consciousness in the Writings of Sigmund Freud and Søren Kierkegaard: A Theoretical Study in the Correlation of Religious and Psychiatric Concepts." Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1962.
- RPCF*** *Religious Pathology and Christian Faith*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966.
- TTM*** *The Transforming Moment: Understanding Convictional Experiences*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981.
- TTM2*** *The Transforming Moment*, Revised, Second Edition. Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers & Howard, 1989.
- TKM*** *The Knight's Move: The Relational Logic of the Spirit in Theology and Science* (with W. Jim Neidhardt). Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers & Howard, 1992.
- LS*** *The Logic of the Spirit: Human Development in Theological Perspective*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998.

INTRODUCTION

The theological writings of James E. Loder, Jr. (1931-2001) require a wider audience. For more than forty years he developed and exercised an interdisciplinary methodology that identified patterns of correlation in the fields of psychology, educational theory, phenomenology, epistemology, and physics producing a powerful theological vision that centers around the person and work of the Holy Spirit engaging and transforming human life. At his untimely death in November, 2001, Loder was the Mary D. Synnott Professor of the Philosophy of Christian Education at the Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey (U. S. A.), where he lectured primarily in the areas of human development and the philosophy of education. If Loder is known at all, he is recognized for his work in the area of practical theology, especially among church educators. Even in the discipline of practical theology his work is largely unknown and has yet to receive the recognition it deserves from systematic theologians, biblical scholars, as well as clergy and laity. It is my hope to help change this.

The purpose of this thesis is to introduce and examine, explore and decipher the complexity of Loder's thought in order to make it more accessible to a wider public. This important task is done in service to the broader goal of demonstrating that Loder's work, particularly his pneumatology, is of inestimable value to the discipline of theology and theology's service to the work of the church. At the core of Loder's work is what I characterize as a *relational phenomenological pneumatology*. The Christian life is preeminently relational, distinguished by a relationship with God constituted by Jesus Christ, and sustained by the Holy Spirit. The relation, Loder claims, takes place in and through the life of the Holy Spirit who operates within a complementary relationship with the human spirit, in what he describes as the *analogia spiritus*: an intimate, transformational interrelation of the Holy Spirit and the human spirit. The Holy Spirit, intimately connected to the person and work of Christ, takes up and extends the work begun in the incarnation by enfleshing the presence of Christ in the life of an individual in ways that are transformationally Christomorphic. What makes Loder's work unique is the way he articulates a theology of the Holy Spirit that incorporates a firm grasp of the way the self participates in and comes to have a knowledge of itself, the world, and God. It is precisely the logic of this dynamic, I would argue, that has extraordinary implications for the way we articulate the Christian experience. My thesis, therefore, is that Loder's relational phenomenological pneumatology contains rich and principally unrecognized resources for providing new frameworks for the Christian life.

Loder asserts that intrinsic to the Christian life are experiences of *metanoia*. These are moments of conviction, moments of transformation, "sometimes of a revolutionary proportions," when a new knowledge "*comes upon us*," arriving from beyond the limited confines of the knower, when knowing itself yields to "a higher intelligibility" as mediated by the Holy Spirit.¹ A particular *Augenblick* or "moment" can be experienced as swiftly as the blinking of the eye; or the duration of the moment can be stretched over the length of one's lifetime, which when compared to the age of the universe is equally

¹TTM2, p. 216. Italics in the text.

swift. Either way, the Holy Spirit actively engages the human spirit, and through an interpersonal experience that operates deeper than the defensive structures of the ego, graciously transfigures reality in a process that Loder calls “intensification,” whereby reality itself is reconstituted by the Spirit who is the bearer of *all* truth (John 16:13). A convictional encounter with the Spirit of Christ always yields a higher order of knowing.² By “higher,” Loder does not mean “up and out,” for such knowledge does not take us out of the world. Instead, he refers to the way the Spirit reframes the way we view ourselves and our reality and puts us into reality in completely new ways. Because the pattern is incarnational, it puts us *down and into* the world, as it is being revealed to us anew by the Spirit. The Spirit embeds us into space-time and grants us a more profound engagement with the world and a deeper apprehension of the meaning and importance of human life in the eyes of God, meaning an individual could never construct on her or her own.

More specifically, Loder’s elemental premise is that the Christian message is first and foremost about healing, restoration, renewal, in a word - *transformation*. Those who encountered Jesus Christ experienced personal transformation in moments of *conviction* which radically altered their understanding of God, themselves and others, gave them new life and put them in a new social relationship with the world. The early church was called out from ordinary life to witness, to testify to what it saw and heard, and in its preaching invited women and men to participate in that *new* reality, to live into the *ongoing* life of the Holy Spirit transforming individuals and societies after the pattern of Christ. What was true then can be and is still true in the present. Loder’s goal is to help people in any age to be open to the ways the Holy Spirit continues to transform human life, to know that the “Spiritual Presence of God in Jesus Christ [is] at work to restore an anguished creation to its Creator.”³ His writings attempt to articulate the *how* of conviction. “Convictional experiences do not belong only to those who have them,” Loder contends, “but to anyone who is willing to wrestle through to a dawning of the new sense of reality they disclose.”⁴ He holds out the possibility of conviction to anyone willing to open themselves up to the work of the Holy Spirit.

To suggest that Loder’s theology provides *new* frameworks for the Christian life obviously assumes that there are already frameworks in place. But to speak of new ones is also to say something about their inadequacy, another way of saying that there is something wrong with the present state of affairs. There is. There is a crisis of meaning within the Christian experience; and there is something *desperately* wrong with the church, especially in Europe and North America. The church is in trouble, with membership, attendance, and involvement declining every year. I would argue that the church is

²*TKM*, pp. 213-215.

³*TTM2*, p. 219.

⁴*TTM2*, p. 219.

in trouble because its *people* are in trouble and the church is powerless to help. For too long the church has exerted its efforts at self-preservation, at the expense of the people. The church and its theologians have failed to speak a compelling word of hope and healing to the existential crises of the human condition and so people have left.

But how can there be a new understanding of the Christian life two thousand years after Jesus? Loder is not trying to rework the Christian faith to make it palatable to the masses in order to grow the church. He is not trying to defend the faith. He is not trying to “prove” Christian truth claims. Neither is he trying to discern what can be rationally retained and then given intellectual sophistication. He is concerned with the “how” of the Christian life, more than the “what.” His frameworks are new in the sense that what he offers are things that have been forgotten, ignored, or distorted by philosophical and theological frameworks over the last two thousand years of the church. The Christian life is not another life set apart from ordinary life, but the renewing of ordinary life by Christ himself. It is the eschatological recreation of the creature overcoming its inherent alienation from the Creator (2 Corinthians 5:19) Loder reminds us that the “how” of the Christian life entails a relationship of profound intimacy between the Holy Spirit and the human spirit and in that relationship one comes to have a new understanding of what life looks like for the human being claimed by Christ. His theology calls us to a renewed appreciation for the ascriptive worth of human beings wrestling throughout their lives with two fundamental questions: “What is a lifetime?” and “Why do I live it?” These are questions of the human spirit struggling to find meaning and love in a world that often appears devoid of both. If Christian theology and the church that it serves are going to speak to the contemporary crisis within Western Christianity, then it needs to speak *directly* to these integral questions of human life. This is the value of Loder’s work, by helping us to *see* that the Holy Spirit is at work in human life, *addressing* the human spirit with the presence of Christ at precisely the point of greatest need.

The task at hand is to open the eyes of the blind. Elizabeth Nordquist has identified the “seeming lack of awareness that many church members have about the presence and the power of the Spirit in their own lives.”⁵ To correct this becomes a monumental task, given the fact that the contemporary church is not unlike the church in Ephesus which said to Paul, “We have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit. (Acts 19:2)” It is a telling indicator of the present state of things that in a recent volume exploring the future of Reformed theology (the tradition out of which Loder writes), not one chapter or essay is dedicated to a discussion of pneumatology.⁶ This is why Loder’s thought needs to be

⁵Elizabeth Nordquist, “The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Formation,” in Joseph D. Small, Editor, *Fire and Wind: The Holy Spirit in the Church Today* (Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 2002), p. 122.

⁶David Willis and Michael Welker, Editors, *Toward the Future of Reformed Theology: Tasks, Topics, Traditions*, With Special Collaboration with Matthias Gockel (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999). Jürgen Moltmann points to the leading principle of the church and its theology reformed according to God’s Word: *ecclesia reformata et semper reformanda*, and therefore also

acknowledged in the life and work of the church. I believe that his pneumatology has the ability to speak a new and creative word of hope to the troubling state of the church in the West.

Summary of the Chapters

An examination of Loder's thought cannot be divorced from a detailed exploration of his life. In the first chapter I will provide an overview of his life, survey his early writings and identify the significant influences upon his thought. The propelling power behind everything he wrote was his need to come to terms with two intensely powerful religious experiences that changed his life. Loder firmly believed that before theological statements are articulated in dogmatic declarations or confessional statements they are first *experienced* within the existential conflict, struggle, and resolution that come when an individual encounters the holiness of God - the Convictor. Failing to connect with the generative source of theological claims is not only detrimental to the discipline of theology, but also disastrous for the church and any vision of the Christian life. Loder's theology cannot be fully appreciated or fathomed without a knowledge of his own personal, existential struggle. To sever his theology from his life would seriously distort the meaning and significance of his work.

Loder's academic contributions, beginning with his doctoral dissertation, emanate from the need to make sense of these two convictional experiences, which opened the question of his reality, and redefined his life. They compelled him to question his own preconceived notions of what is real and possible, obliged him to reform his theological perspectives, and shaped his understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Loder's lifework can be viewed as an exercise of *faithfulness*, that is, being faithful to what he had come to know. He wrote from within his experience; yet, what he offered was more than just his own subjectivist musings. Therefore, this chapter will look at key episodes in his life in order to see how they aroused his theological imagination up through 1970.

In chapter two we turn to the heart of Loder's work with a detailed examination of themes that cluster around what I have termed a relational phenomenological pneumatology. This chapter will focus upon his publications from 1970 through 2002. Instead of going through them in order of appearance, I prefer to look at these themes as a whole, thereby highlighting the generative center of Loder's thought and its wider applications. The year 1970 marks a major turning in his life as he takes up pneumatological considerations after a near-fatal car accident and another major experience of conviction. He begins to construct a theology of the Holy Spirit that is grounded in the Reformed theological tradition, yet informed by insights into the dynamics of human transformation and experiences of conviction. During this period we see Loder becoming a theologian of conviction. For more than thirty years he developed and creatively employed a unique psycho-spiritual, epistemological

theologia reformata et semper reformanda, (p. 121)" If the Holy Spirit is in service to the Word (as the church has claimed), then how can there be reform without the Holy Spirit?

framework that articulates a vision of the Christian life as primarily an experience of conviction by the Spiritual Presence of Christ.

All the major themes and terms of Loder's convictional theology are addressed in this one chapter. We will focus primarily on writings that come after 1970; however, these do not arrive in a vacuum. They flow out of the insights and ideas which originated initially at Princeton and Harvard. After an overview of the principal publications of this period – *The Transforming Moment* (1981, 1989); *The Knight's Move: The Relational Logic of the Spirit in Theology and Science* (1992, co-authored with the late physicist, W. Jim Neidhardt); and *The Logic in the Spirit: Human Development in Theological Perspective* (1998) – we will turn to a critical analysis of the main components of and influences upon Loder's thought. His writings have been critiqued for being congenitally taxing. As an interdisciplinarian pulling from a wide range of disciplines and sources with adeptness and fluidity, his works have been notoriously difficult to fathom. Categorizing the center of his thought as a relational phenomenological pneumatology provides an interpretative framework to gain better access to Loder's thought. It also provides further insight into the way his theology has something profound to say about the nature of the Christian life. Because one of the purposes of this dissertation is to provide Loder a wider audience, I have been generous in the number of quotations to his work (in this chapter and all chapters). His prose is complex, but also inherently rich. Language is pushed to its extremes to articulate the inarticulable.

Chapter three takes up themes implicit to Loder's theology, but have never before been made formally explicit. He is interested in the nature of *reality* and the way *realities* are constructed by the human knower. His ultimate concern, however, is not reality itself, but the degree to which the construction of reality allows for a *present* connection or intimacy to form with the person Jesus Christ. The paleontologist, Stephen Jay Gould (d. 2002), observed, "The more important the subject and the closer it cuts to the bone of our hopes and needs, the more we are likely to err in establishing a framework for analysis."⁷ For the Christian, there is no more important *subject* that cuts to the bone of humanity's hopes and needs than the person Jesus Christ. The ways we have theologically construed "history" have not served the church because they have failed to help us make this connection. If we take up Loder's epistemological, psycho-spiritual interpretative framework and bring it to bear upon the ways we theologically approach questions regarding history and faith, we see that life in the Spirit radically reorients reality and our relationship in and with the structures of space and time (or more correctly in a post-Einsteinian world, space-time). The Christian life is grounded in the pneumatological mediation of Christ which is not limited to the past, but a present reality. Loder brings us to a theological consideration of the nature of historical existence as a relational reality. The present becomes a relational

⁷Stephen Jay Gould, *Full House: The Spread of Excellence from Plato to Darwin* (New York: Harmony Books, 1996), p. 30.

field of encounter created by the Holy Spirit who is continually at work in the redemption of people through the power of Christ.

Finally, in chapter four we come to see the life of the Christian in the field of encounter as an openness to the world. The convictional theology explored in chapter two, combined with our consideration of historical existence as a relational reality in chapter three, leads us to a fuller appreciation of Loder's understanding of the Holy Spirit's at work in the world. If the Spirit of Christ is engaging the human spirit, then what is the Spirit trying to realize *in* us and *through* us for the world? How do we know when the Spirit of Christ is at work in our lives? What are the characteristics or style of the Holy Spirit? How can we discern this Christomorphic pattern? In seeking to grasp the significance of his own convictional experiences, Loder's work conveys the important point that what God did in his life is no different from what the Creator Spirit can do and is doing with and for every human life willing to risk intimacy with the Holy. Loder believed that what he experienced was neither unique nor rare. He holds out the promise that any one can encounter the God he encountered. He used his life as a framework through which one might come to discern the movement of the Spirit of Christ in their own life. The transformational pattern of the Spirit is at work in people's lives – both in and beyond the church – whether they know it or not. This is what the church needs to relearn, so that the church can help individuals discern what God is doing in their lives, to help them know that God has reached out to them in Christ and reaches now through Christ's Spirit with extraordinary love.

It is in this context that we see Loder's biting critique of the institutional church. Indeed, what he offers is considerably threatening to those who see ministry as primarily service to and preservation of a traditional institution, approaches to ministry that have been deadly for those sitting in the pew (if they are still in the pew). In this chapter, I offer my own interpretation of Loder's theology and state what I see as the considerable implications of this theology for the way we view the Christian life. As such, I see a radical and even subversive element within Loder's thought. It is edgy and uncomfortable with present ecclesiastical restrictions that appear to hinder the work of the Holy Spirit. This is the work of the church – to preach, to teach, to en flesh this message in the lives of individuals – personally, relationally – which for him is the summary of the Gospel. The Spirit is not in service to the church, but in service to the Word who through the Spirit is continuing the work of the incarnation by enfleshing human life with the Spirit of God. This has revolutionary ramifications for the church and the world. The Spirit has no respect for the past or for traditions *per se*, no respect for the institution, but only for the redemption of human lives and how redeemed lives live within what Loder prefers to call the *koinonia*. Trusting in the movement of the Holy Spirit thus frees the church to be as revolutionary and as radical as the Gospel message itself. Released to be authentically, creatively present, kinetically moving through space-time under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the church will then be free to be present to the age and thus free to speak a creative word of healing in such a way that is contextual, that

is meaningful to the age. One of the motivating factors in Loder's decision to write *The Transforming Moment* was his belief that what happened to him and what he learned from it were "for the church."⁸ Despite his aims, for all intent and purposes his work is still largely unknown in the parish and inaccessible to both theologians and clergy alike. It is my hope that this thesis will help remedy this situation.

One personal note before we proceed. As we move through the themes of these chapters, I would like to envision myself as a *pastoral theologian*. By doing so, I am responding to Ellen T. Charry's call "to revive the pastoral function of theology," which "requires theologians to think of themselves as pastors helping people to find their identity in God."⁹ In writing as a pastoral theologian, I wish to extend Loder's work by identifying its radical implication for the conduct of ministry. This will be most evident in chapter four. As a Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (U. S. A.), I have served congregations in both Scotland and the United States over the last twelve years. While wrestling with many of the ideas discussed throughout this thesis, I also tested them out in very well-educated, sophisticated faith communities, primarily through sermons, seminars, and in pastoral counseling situations with astonishing results. Both my research and parish experience have confirmed my belief that the church is in a state of crisis and requires new frameworks for talking about both the "how" and the "what" of the Christian life. Loder's convictional theology offers such a framework. But Loder needs to be translated - rendered first for theologians and then for ministers engaged in the flesh and blood issues of human existence. Let us proceed to a fuller explication of his vision for the Christian life.

⁸From an interview with James E. Loder, conducted by Dr. Dana R. Wright in Princeton (April, 2000). Recorded, transcribed and held by Wright in Princeton.

⁹Ellen T. Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 238-239. She notes that, "This is challenging, for not only does it require a change in thinking, it also means that theologians must think of themselves as spiritual directors."

CHAPTER ONE

Encounter with the Convictor: Explorations Through a Christian Life

"'What is a lifetime?' and 'Why do I live it?'"
-James E. Loder

This chapter will introduce and provide an overview of the interdisciplinary work of James Edwin Loder, Jr. We will survey his early writings, identify the significant influences upon his thought, and flesh out the dominant themes that inform the rest of his *oeuvre*. His thoughts offer a vision that has far reaching implications for the way we grasp the nature of human life, particularly when that life is brought into a relationship with what Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (1813-1855) called the God-man, the "Absolute Paradox" – Jesus Christ.¹ The driving force behind every intellectual pursuit, both personally as a Christian and scholar (which he held together in a creative tension), was Loder's need to come to terms with his own encounter with the God-man, specifically two pivotal religious, or more correctly, "convictional" experiences that changed his life. Loder firmly believed before theological statements are articulated in dogmatic declarations or confessional statements they are first *experienced* within the existential conflict, struggle, and resolution that come when an individual encounters the Holiness of God - the Convictor. Failing to connect with the generative source of theological claims is not only detrimental to the discipline of theology, but disastrous for the church and any vision of the Christian life. Loder's theology cannot be fully appreciated or fathomed without a knowledge of his own personal, existential struggle. To sever his theology from his life would seriously distort the meaning and significance of his work. Therefore, this chapter will look at key episodes in his life in order to see how they aroused his theological imagination.

Briefly, conviction, as Loder came to define it, is an experience that involves the Convictor, the convicted person, and "the endurance through time of the convictional relationship between them."² In this relationship, the "convicted person is compelled to reopen the question of reality in light of the presumed nature of the Convictor and the convictional relationship." The Convictor opens up reality for the convicted and calls for new interpretations of reality. These experiences leave the convicted with two options: One can either choose to live from the new reality revealed in and through conviction, being faithful to the experience or one can deny it and live without integrity. Depending on how one chooses will shape the way reality is configured. One approach seeks to live in the truth, seeking to be faithful to the experience while the other is living in illusion. We tend to function with predetermined pictures of reality and with it, make assumptions about what is or is not *realistically* possible. This is because we are processing reality by way of analogy with what we

¹Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments/ Johannes Climacus*, Edited and Translated with Introduction and Notes by Howard V. Hong and Edna V. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 37ff.

²*TTM2*, pp. 14, 93ff.

have experienced in the past and thus, delimiting what could or could not be in the moment, prizing consistency and continuity. Convictional experiences disturb consistency, introduce discontinuity, expose these assumptions, and shatter them. A way to theologically approach these experiences is needed because they stand at the center of the Biblical tradition and are needed in our attempt to articulate a contemporary understanding of the Christian experience. The "experiences we want to eventually understand in *Christian* terms are precisely those that reopen the question of reality because the subject of the experience has been convicted by a Spiritual Presence far greater than the subject him- or herself."³

While we will explore Loder's convictional theology more fully in the next chapter, what concerns us here is the emergence of a dynamic hermeneutic that pervades Loder's life and work. One needs to pay close attention to the way conviction is defined; for in the definition we are given insight into what I would argue is Loder's most significant claim for the Christian life: *The primacy of relationality*. In his definition of conviction as an exchange between two parties - the Convictor and the convicted - we see what is most important to Loder and thus, given a glimpse into what I think is the heart of his thinking. Conviction is not a relationship between equals. One party is active (the Convictor); the other is passive (the convicted). But this in no way precludes the possibility that an interaction is possible. It is precisely the asymmetry of the relationship that not only sustains the experience, but makes it redemptive.

It is "the endurance through time of the convictional experience" that shapes one's life and thus defines reality. To borrow a term from Michael Polanyi (1891-1976), which Loder enjoyed using, one must "indwell" the relationship over time. To "indwell . . . phenomenon," Loder means, "allowing it to disclose its inner intelligibility vis-à-vis the frame of reference involved. Ultimately, only the object of knowledge can yield up the truth about itself."⁴ So one lives *in* and *through* the experience over time. It is not a one time event because the relationship endures. In fact, the relationship takes on a life of its own. This is what Loder means by "relationality." It is not synonymous with relationship. "A connection that is maintained by two polarities is a relationship; when that relationship takes on a life of its own, defining and sustaining the polarities - not the other

³*TTM2*, p. 14.

⁴*TKM*, p. 89. See also Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), pp. 195-202. "The indwelling of the Christian worshipper is . . . a continued attempt at breaking out, at casting off the condition of man, even while humbly acknowledging its inescapability. Such indwelling is fulfilled most completely when it increases this effort to the utmost. It resembles not the dwelling within a great theory of which we enjoy the complete understanding, nor an immersion in the pattern of a musical masterpiece, but the heuristic upsurge which strives to break through the accepted frameworks of thought, guided by the intimations of discoveries still beyond our horizon (pp. 198-200)."

way around - then we will speak of a relationality.”⁵ Understanding the structure of this relationship participating in a large relationality permeates everything Loder wrote and believed.

This chapter will explore the early origins of this thought, which led him to these conclusions. Loder’s academic contributions, beginning with his doctoral dissertation, emanate from a time of “indwelling” convictional experiences, which reopened the question of [his] reality, allowing them to define his life. They compelled him to question his own preconceived notions of what is real and possible, obliged him to reform his theological perspectives, and shaped his understanding of what it means to a disciple of Jesus Christ. Loder’s life-work can be viewed as an exercise of *faithfulness*, that is, being faithful to what he had come to know. He wrote from within his experience; yet, what he offered was more than just his own subjectivist musings. My purpose is not to write biography - although theology cannot be divorced from biography because the knower must be included in what is known. But analyzing the way we know also tells us something about the very structure of the universe. Loder notes, “The universe we have got our heads into is in some respects already in our heads to begin with.”⁶ Therefore, it would be inappropriate and intellectually misleading to divorce personality from thought (something that Loder would never do). The point needs to be stressed that one cannot begin to fathom Loder’s thought without seeing how it is grounded in the reality disclosed to him through the Spiritual Presence of Christ. In order to appreciate this, we will first look at his own *entré* into the Christian life and see how he lived it.

I. Early Life and Princeton

James Edwin Loder was born on the 5th December 1931 in Nebraska (United States of America), where his father, Edwin, was a primary school principal. His mother, Frances, had an interest in drama and theater and late in life taught speech and drama at the University of Texas-Austin. Edwin and Frances were not people of faith and did not go to church. However, around the age of eight or nine James began to attend church on his own, with the full support of his parents. From an early age he had a precocious curiosity about almost everything. His kindergarten teacher told his mother, “Every day we read a story, and after the story is over, Jimmy gets up and wants to tell us what the story *means*.” It is not surprising, given his sensitivities and desire to grasp human experience with depth, that after graduation from secondary school he took up the study of philosophy at Carlton College, located in Northfield, Minnesota (USA).⁷

⁵LS, p. 16, 7n.

⁶LS, p. 8.

⁷Freda Gardner, “James Edwin Loder, Jr.: A Tribute,” delivered before the Princeton Seminary faculty on 13th February 2002, published in *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* XXIII(2002): 188-194; Tamara (Loder) Tiss, “James Loder: Our Christlike Father and Gracious Friend.” *The Princeton*

In 1954, Loder entered the Bachelor of Divinity program at the Princeton Theological Seminary, located in Princeton, New Jersey (USA). The three-year course of study offered the foundational training experience for those seeking to serve the church, although we do not know if he had any desire to enter parish ministry at that time. Loder said when he arrived in Princeton as a philosophy student, he spent most of his time thinking instead of praying.⁸

During his first term, he was called home to the "long siege" of tending to his father who was recently diagnosed with brain cancer. Watching his father die a slow death for nine months threw James into a deep depression that lasted for another nine months. Sick in bed with a glandular infection, Loder recounted, "The sense of void was all-pervasive." Everything that belonged to his father was "still and useless" and so was the state of Loder's world, in which he "tried to compose meaning. Everything had turned to cardboard, flat and empty; every day was the same dull experience regardless of whom I saw or what occurred."⁹ A "rupture" of his reality had occurred that could not be healed or repaired through his own efforts. He was unable to compose any meaning in his reality. In bed, he began to pray, even though there was "seemingly nothing to pray to." He decided to write out his prayers. This did not help, either. Then one morning, in a state of extreme frustration, Loder said, "I got so angry I threw down my pencil, smashed my fist into the pillow, and shouted at God, 'If you're there, *do* something!'" Then:

[God] did something, but it was not what the philosophy major wanted. It was instead a warm life, like gentle electricity, that started at the bottom of my feet and rushed through my entire body, filling me with such strength and vitality that it almost threw me out of bed. I leaped up singing what no good philosophy major should sing, "Blessed assurance, Jesus Is Mine!" In my excitement, I picked up Emil Brunner's little book, *The Scandal of Christianity*, and I think I must have read it in ten minutes. It was as if I had suddenly entered into the central intuition out of which the book had been written. So I recognized, more than I read, everything that was being said.¹⁰

Seminary Bulletin, XIII (2002), p. 72.

⁸*TM1*, p. 86

⁹*TTM*, p. 86. The reference to "the void," has a specific Loderian meaning. We will explore his definition in the next chapter. For now let it be understood that the void is "nothingness, or the negation of being," experienced not beyond being, but *within* it. "Void is the ultimate aim of all proximate forms of nothingness; the implicit aim of conflict, absence, loneliness, and death is void." *TTM*, p. 79; *TTM2*, pp 80ff.

¹⁰*TTM*, pp. 86-87. "Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine!" was composed by the blind American hymn-writer and poetess, Frances Jane "Fanny" Crosby (1820-1915). Writer of more than 9,000 hymns and known as the "Hymn Queen," Crosby's hymns were extremely personal in nature and expressed the intimacies of her relationship with God. The text of "Blessed Assurance" was written in 1873, based on Hebrews 10: 21-22. The hymn-tune was written by Phoebe Palmer Knapp (1839-1908). It is interesting that Loder "chose" this hymn to sing in praise because, in many ways, it foreshadows and highlights themes and images that are later amplified in Loder's theology. Loder does not say if he sang all of the

Loder confessed that this was “the first time I had experienced the presence of God’s Spirit in any palpable sense.” He was “delighted” by the way “the magnificent Presence of that One” enabled him to recompose his life with a “richness, depth, and excitement I had never known before.”¹¹

Recollecting years later, Loder said “this experience of Christ after [my] father’s death ‘scandalized’ the despair [I] felt, ruined it, and placed it in the service of the Presence of Christ.”¹² In this experience, Loder started to recognize the logic or sequence of transformation, the pattern by which an individual life is transformed in the Presence of Christ. It is a pattern, as we shall see, that preoccupied Loder for the rest of his life.

It was immensely significant that in this first transforming experience, Loder the philosopher turned to Emil Brunner’s (1889-1966) *Scandal* and was absorbed by it. Instead of reading the text, the text read *him*. Even as it provided comfort and a language to “make sense” of his experience, one can well imagine that Loder was thrown into an enormous existential conflict, dismantling any notion that he could intellectually recompose his world, destroying any possibility of philosophically reasoning his way into a knowledge or relationship with God, thus smashing any hope that the kind of despair he suffered could be overcome by his own volition. “The God of the philosophers,” Brunner made clear, “is not the triune God of Christian faith.” Here Brunner echoes the knowledge of God given to Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) after his own convictional experience, the well-known vision of 1654: “*Dieu d’Abraham d’Isaac et de Jacob non des philosophes.*”¹³ For the “God of philosophy is, by definition, an idea acquired by man’s own thinking,” Brunner stresses.

verse, but it is likely that he would have been familiar with them. Stanza 1: “Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! / O what a foretaste of glory divine! Heir of salvation, purchase of God. Born of his Spirit, washed in his blood. *Refrain:* This is my story, this is my song. / Praising my Savior all the day long. / This is my story, this is my song. / Praising my Savior all the day long. Stanza 2: “Perfect submission, perfect delight, / Visions of rapture not burst on my sight. / Angels descending bring from above / Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.” Stanza 3: “Perfect submission, all is at rest. / I in my Savior am happy and blest, / Watching and waiting looking above / filled with his goodness, lost in his love.”

¹¹ *TTM*, p. 87.

¹² Dana R. Wright, “Ruination Unto Redemption in the Spirit: A Short Biography of a Reformed ‘Wise Guy,’” *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, XXII (2002), pp. 77-78.

¹³ Emil Brunner, *The Scandal of Christianity: The Gospel as Stumbling Block to Modern Man* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1978), p. 32. “In the year of Grace, 1654, On Monday, 23rd of November, Feast of St. Clement, Pope and Martyr, and of others in the Martyrology, Vigil of Saint Chrysogonus, martyr and others, From bout half past ten in the evening until about half past twelve FIRE God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob not of the philosophers and scholars. Certitude. Certitude. Feeling. Joy. Peace. God of Jesus Christ.” Complete account cited in Donald W. McCullough, *The Trivialization of God: The Dangerous Illusion of Manageable Deity* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1995), p. 77.

[T]his God is not a living God in the sense of biblical testimony, that is in the sense of a personal reality intervening in the course of human history. It is not a Thou addressing man: 'I am the Lord Thy God.' It is the movement of man's own thought, which, so to say, in its end reached God. The initiative, the movement leading toward knowledge, lies entirely on the side of the human mind, not on the side of God. It is a God whom to reach lies within the possibilities of human thinking. It is not a God who, from outside human capacities, enters by his own movement and by his own initiative into the thought-world of men and, so to say, bursts open the closed globe of human thought.¹⁴

Because the triune God is "the one who revealed himself in Jesus Christ," through and in a historical person, faith for the Christian is understood relationally, regarded as "a real *encounter* in which something happens that cannot happen within man's own thought-life."¹⁵

The convictional experience, combined with Brunner's text, were direct attacks upon the foundations of his being, mortal blows, what Loder would call "positive aggressions" of God's Spirit dismantling his reality (not unlike the gracious crippling of Jacob in Genesis 32), forcing Loder to reconfigure the meaning of his life.¹⁶ The process of reconfiguration required plumbing the depths of his being and yielding his life to the work of God's Spirit. Brunner reminds those who claim to be wise "that all the treasures of wisdom are hid in Christ." Yet the message of Christ demands "hard and deep thinking" done to the glory of God and to honor God's wisdom. "At the present time, when man is filled with his own wisdom, the gospel truth will hardly seize man's heart without forcing upon him some hard thinking."¹⁷

The hard thinking began when Loder returned to Princeton Seminary and set out to work through the full implications of his experience, both theologically and psychologically. Before him was the challenge to remain faithful to his encounter with Christ without trying to account for it only in psychological terms. The transformation was more than psychological, more than just the healing of the depression. "It was much too transcendent and the reality into which I was put wasn't anything like what could be conveyed to me by a therapist. . . .It was outside the realm of psychological adjustment."¹⁸ Finding it difficult to find people at Princeton who could resonate with

¹⁴Brunner, p. 35.

¹⁵Brunner, p. 36. Emphasis added. See also Brunner's discussion of the "personal correspondence" between God and humanity in *The Divine-Human Encounter*, trans. Amandus W. Loos (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1944), pp. 50ff.

¹⁶Loder's reference to "positive aggression," in Wright, p. 77.

¹⁷Brunner, pp. 114-115.

¹⁸Taken from the transcription of an eight-hour, audio-tape interview of Loder by Dana Wright on 6th April 2001. Recorded, transcribed, and held by Wright in Princeton. I am grateful to Dana Wright for allowing me to make copies of these transcriptions.

his experience, he eventually told his story to a visiting professor of theology from Switzerland, Hans Hofmann (1923- ?). Hofmann listened with a serious and sympathetic ear, without dismissing it or explaining it away, which had a profound impact upon the direction Loder's life would take.¹⁹ He proposed that Loder read the works of Kierkegaard in order to find a framework to think theologically and philosophically about the transformation that took place in his life.²⁰ Loder devoured Kierkegaard, providing, as he put it, a "language for my head." Dana Wright refers to this connection with Kierkegaard as "monumental," offering a language that preoccupied Loder throughout his life that never ceased "to challenge his own faith-seeking- understanding."²¹

Before leaving Princeton Seminary, we can see the convictional experience starting to shape his academic studies in significant ways. During his final year (of a three-year program), Loder and several other students refused to take a course in Christian education taught by D. Campbell Wyckoff, one of the leading Christian educational theorists in the United States at the time, because in his view "it supposedly lacked philosophical depth at the foundational disciplines level." Here we note a shift from an interest in philosophy to the philosophy of Christian education. Wyckoff gave them permission to create their own course at a depth that would satisfy both themselves and academic requirements. "In a powerful way," Wright observes, "this effort to put together an *ad hoc* course initiated Dr. Loder into what would become his lifelong quest - to critique the conceptual inadequacies of the field of Christian at the metatheoretical level and to reconstruct them according

¹⁹ It is reasonable to assume that Hofmann is still alive, but I can find no indication whether this is true or not. Harvard University informed me that they have no information on him in their biographical catalogue. My guess is that he is dead. In the Wright transcription, Loder expressed his indebtedness to Hans Hofmann and the instrumental role he played in introducing him to Kierkegaard. Loder reflects upon that period of his life, saying, "I knew that transformation had occurred to me at my father's death, and that it was not, could not be explained psychologically. It wasn't like psychotherapy. And Hofmann was impressed with that. He kind of took me under his wing, and it's under his tutelage that I started to study Kierkegaard. And I studied the understanding of the self in [Carl] Jung [1875-1961]." 6th April 2001 in Princeton.

²⁰ In the mid-1950's, American theologians did not possess the same familiarity with Kierkegaard which was common in Europe due to their translation from Danish into German early in the last century. *Philosophical Fragments*, translated by D. F. Swenson, was the first English rendering of Kierkegaard to appear in the United States (Princeton, 1936). D. F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie's translations from the late 1930's through the mid-1940's opened Americans to Kierkegaard's thought. Illustrative of this fact is that even though Loder was a philosophy major, he only came to Kierkegaard as a result of Hofmann's suggestion. Hofmann's familiarity with Kierkegaard was due to his theological education in Europe, no doubt influenced by the Kierkegaardian influences in the work of his mentor, Emil Brunner. Also, see the Stone Lectures of 1936 given at Princeton Seminary. Cf. Eduard Geisman (1871-1939), *Lectures on the Religious Thought of Søren Kierkegaard*, Introduction by David F. Swenson (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Press, 1937) which refers to a general skepticism, an assumed "demonic element" within the human idealism expressed in Kierkegaard's writings (vii).

²¹ Wright, "Ruination Unto Redemption," p. 78.

to the integrity and coherence of what Kierkegaard called 'the Positive Absurd' or what Paul Lehmann [1904- 1994] described as the God-man structure of reality." Swayed by both Kierkegaard and Hofmann, Loder decided his life vocation would be spent "deepening the theoretical self-understanding of Christian education as an interdisciplinary form of practical theology."²² After graduation, Loder followed Hofmann to the Harvard Divinity School of Harvard University located in Cambridge, Massachusetts (USA), personally picked by Hofmann to participate in a year-long immersion in interdisciplinary studies.

A question often left unaddressed regarding Loder, but one that needs to be asked before we move into the next period of his life, is why did Kierkegaard have such an appeal? What was it about Kierkegaard that proved so appealing? We know Kierkegaard was a source of tremendous generativity for Loder. He tells us that when he was a doctoral student at Harvard he listened to Paul Tillich's (1886-1965) lectures on the third volume of his systematics and they appeared to be "cribbed right out of Kierkegaard." Loder was hearing what Wright calls "Kierkegaardian echoes in all he learned."²³ Anyone familiar with Loder's work knows his life-long fascination with Kierkegaard.²⁴ But no one, as far as I know, has asked *why* Loder was so transfixed by Kierkegaard? What in Kierkegaard's thought and life resonated so profoundly in Loder's psyche or spirit, especially with regards to his experience of transformation? We pose these questions, not to psychoanalyze his drives and thus reductionistically rationalize them away. Loder never *explicitly* explains why Kierkegaard provided a "language for [his] head," yet the study of Kierkegaard remained a preoccupation for the rest of his life.²⁵

It is beyond the scope this dissertation to consider all the Kierkegaardian influences upon Loder's thought, but I would suggest and hope to show throughout this dissertation, that one of the major themes running through Loder's writings is the need to embrace what he called the "the human

²²Wright, p. 78. See also Loder's entry, "Interdisciplinary Studies," *Harper's Encyclopedia of Religious Education*. Iris V. Cully & Kendig Brubaker Cully, general editors (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), p. 327-328.

²³Wright, p. 78.

²⁴Loder periodically taught an advanced seminar on Kierkegaard with enrollment limited to about ten students. After retirement, he hoped to write a book on Kierkegaard and practical theology, based on these lectures. After his death his Kierkegaard papers and seminar lectures were placed in a safe at Speer Library, Princeton Theological Seminary, considered valuable contributions to Kierkegaard scholarship. They will probably be placed in the Loder archives recently established by Princeton, with the possibility of publication at a later date.

²⁵This is most pronounced, as we shall see, in *The Knight's Move*. But also see his reviews of Arnold B. Come, *Kierkegaard as Humanist: Discovering My Self in Theology Today* 54(1997): 130-134 and Murray A. Rae, *Kierkegaard's Vision of the Incarnation: By Faith Transformed in Theology Today* 56 (2000): 638-639.

factor" of all knowledge.²⁶ This, not unlike Polanyi's claim that the knower must be included in what is known, he learned from Kierkegaard.²⁷ The "I" must be *preserved* and *respected* in every epistemological action. A *space* must be preserved for the knower - meaning the self, or the person - that will free the "I" to choose and thereby to live in freedom - the freedom to be authentic, honest, and faithful, the freedom to choose a life of communion with God, a life that God has already freely chosen to give through Christ, even in our estrangement. Ultimately, this space can only be granted by One who not only creates in freedom, but also grants freedom to His creation. Loder's interest in Kierkegaard is more than an intellectual curiosity, however; Kierkegaard is important because of the way he articulates Loder's experience of Christ. Loder discovered that in his experiences of the Spirit his sense of self was neither obliterated nor enslaved, but heightened and even liberated. Like Paul, Loder knew that, "For freedom, Christ has set us free (Galatians 5:1a)." This freedom can be found only within the relationship with God, a "Thou" who defines and helps to create the "I." The "I" can "either have established itself," Kierkegaard observed, "or have been established by another." The attempt to establish oneself, however, is a "misrelation," ultimately leading to despair.²⁸ Relationally grounded in God, as we shall see, leads to freedom for the "I." Similarly, Loder could intuitively relate to Paul's articulation of the Christian life when he said "I, yet, not-I, but Christ.(Galatians 3:20)" As we will see, this "I/not-I" formula stands at the heart of convictional experiences that shapes the Christian life. This becomes more prominent in Loder's work after 1970, but it is found in embryonic form early in his writings.²⁹ We might say that Loder makes space in the

²⁶Matthew J. Frawley even makes the significant claim that "Loder has understood and applied Kierkegaard's Christian point of view better than anyone one," in "Loder on Kierkegaard," *The Princeton Theological Review*, VII (2000): 9. Loder was Frawley's doctoral advisor. His dissertation is entitled, "Søren Kierkegaard's Christian Anthropology and the Relation Between his Pseudonymous and Religious Writings," Princeton Theological Seminary (2001). James E. Loder, "The Place of Science in Practical Theology: The Human Factor," *International Journal of Practical Theology*, 4 (2000): 22-41. "Doing practical theology requires a keen sensitivity to the human factor, its irreducible importance as a locus of God's action, its creative potential, its pervasive ethical influence and its uniqueness in an otherwise reductionist culture that has yet to realize the enlightenment is over. At the core of practical theology there should be the recognition, preservation, and fullest possible expression of the human factor. (p. 23)"

²⁷Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983). See also Parker J. Palmer, *To Know As We Are Known: A Spirituality of Education* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983).

²⁸Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening*, ed. and trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna V. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 13-15.

²⁹Cf. *TTM2*, pp. 75-80; James E. Loder, "The Fashioning of Power: A Christian Perspective on the Life-Style Phenomenon," *The Context of Contemporary Theology: Essay in Honor of Paul Lehmann*, ed. Alexander J. McKelway and E. David Willis (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1974), p. 194-195.

Christian experience for the "I," because of the way Christ made a space for him, affirmed his uniqueness and particularity, and addressed him personally, relationally. Therefore, answers to the questions raised here with regard to Kierkegaard and Loder might be found by paying close attention to the foundational themes of relationality and the value of the individual, thus paving the way for what Loder beautifully summarized later in his life, "Relationality [is] ontologically prior to rationality."³⁰

Excursus

Before we proceed, it is necessary for us to take a look at the development of theological ideas and particular theologians whose thinking had a significant effect upon Loder's thought and life - influences of both an direct and indirect nature. This background information will be invaluable as we further examine Loder's writings.

A. The Influence of Hans Hofman

While Loder's connection with Kierkegaard was decisive in the unfolding of his thought, we cannot underestimate Hofmann's impact upon his thinking. Loder mentions him only in passing with a quotation in his doctoral dissertation and two footnotes in later works.³¹ This is remarkable given the formidable influence Hofmann had upon him. Before we move to an examination of Loder's doctoral thesis, it would be helpful to take a closer look at Hofmann's intellectual provenance and some of his writings in which we can identify ideas and concerns that emerge within Loder's life work, placing his writings in a wider theological context.

Hans Fritz Hofmann was born on 12th April 1923 in Basel, Switzerland. He studied theology at the University of Basel (1940-1943) and the University of Zürich (1943-1947, 1950), before attending Princeton Theological Seminary as a special student in 1951-1952. He went back to Zürich in 1952 to complete his doctorate in systematic theology, graduating in 1953 with Emil Brunner as his *Doktorvater*.³² His dissertation offered a systematic analysis of Reinhold Niebuhr's (1892-1971) anthropology and was published the next year entitled, *Die Theologie Reinhold Niebuhr: Im Licht*

³⁰LS, p. 8. We will explore this sentence in the next chapter. Also, "... relationality supercedes rationality both ontologically and developmentally." "The Place of Science in Practical Theology: The Human Factor," p. 37.

³¹NRC, p. 1; Footnotes in *RPCF*, p. 246 and *LS*, p. 279. The latter note refers to Hofmann's collection of case studies, one of which was written by Loder who was Hofmann's research assistant at Harvard. See Hans Hofmann, *Religion and Mental Health* (New York: Harper, 1961), chapter 37.

³²*Biographical Catalogue of Princeton Theological Seminary*, published by the Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey, 1978, p. 1952.

*seiner Lehre von der Sünde*³³ Hofmann was ordained in the Evangelical Reformed Church of Switzerland on 3rd October 1950. He served as an assistant pastor in Zürich and later as an assistant chaplain at the university there. In 1953, he returned to Princeton Seminary where he served until 1957, first as assistant and then as associate professor. Even though he was trained as a theologian, Hofmann had a fascination with the psychoanalytic theories of Carl Jung (1875-1961) and was asked to teach pastoral care at Princeton.³⁴ It is not surprising, given his interest in a theological understanding of humanity, that after 1953 he extended his academic interest towards a philosophical, psychiatric, and social scientific understanding of human personality. In 1957, he was appointed Director of the University Project on Religion and Mental Health and Associate Professor of Theology at Harvard Divinity School.³⁵

Just as Hofmann was entering his teenage years, Europe was enthralled in a cataclysmic crisis of its own. In the late 1930's Hofmann read what he called "the fresh and revolutionary" writings of the early Karl Barth (1886-1968), which gave expression to the struggle of his life. He recalls how they "described most accurately the misery of man that I felt so strongly during my adolescence."³⁶ Hofmann's concentration in theological anthropology, together with his later interest in psychology, were put to service in an attempt to understand the nature of human suffering and provide ways of alleviating "the misery of man." He believed that Christian faith contained the resources to address this concern, primarily through the ministry of the church. But the church is in crisis and the root of the problem has to do with the nature of the ministry. "The crucial point is whether we have been slow in recognizing the real potency of our faith and hence inefficient in our ministry."³⁷ This is the core issue for Hofmann. He seems to be saying that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a demonstration of the power of God, containing a strength that sometimes terrorizes the one called to ministry. There is a fundamental disconnection between the power of God available to the believer and an inability to translate and communicate this power in an effective way that

³³Published in Zürich by Zwingli-Verlag in 1954. It was never translated into English.

³⁴Loder described Hofmann as "very colorful." He prided himself on lecturing without notes and some of his colleagues complained about him because he was attracting all of their students. From the interview with Wright, 6th April 2001.

³⁵The Project on Religion and Mental Health was established through a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health to experiment in relating the insights of the social sciences, specifically psychiatry, to theological education.

³⁶Hofmann's contribution to the series, "How Barth Has Influence Me," Edited by Edwin Lewis, *Theology Today*, 23 (1956): 358-375, 369.

³⁷Hans Hofmann, Editor, *Making the Ministry Relevant* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960), p. vii. The assumption of the book is that ministry, in his estimation, had become irrelevant.

transforms human life. The power of God is blocked in the church and the minister must take responsibility for this.

Ministry, he writes, is service to God and the primary way ministers serve God is by serving humanity. The task of the minister, indeed the task of the Christian life (whether ordained or not), is to help people grasp what it means to be human and the meaning of their lives as human.³⁸ This viewpoint has a deep affinity with Loder's own anthropological concerns, especially his mention of the "human factor."

In several volumes, *Making the Ministry Relevant* (which Hofmann edited and provided an introductory chapter), *Religion and Mental Health* (a collection of case studies and questions for group analysis), and *Discovery of Freedom* (an exposition on the nature of freedom in the Christian life) we see Hofmann as the advocate for humanity in a world becoming increasingly dehumanized.³⁹ "Every human being has the innate and irrepressible urge to make sense of life and to have this sense expressed through the unique character of his own personality and in the precise context in which he lives and works. To serve people in the name of God requires that we be able to recognize and under this urge."⁴⁰ The question remains, however, "Are we able to live in our world and organize our living together so that we can survive on human terms? In a highly impersonal, mechanized, and demanding civilization, are the inner human resources both adequate and also sufficiently mobilized for the attainment of a creative common life?"⁴¹ Judaism and Christianity need to regain a sense of the place and significance of the human being in the world.

Hofmann appreciated the insights from existentialism and its impact upon psychotherapy as providing a way to a new humanism. He identified three features common to them both. They are "the human ability to choose and decide - into which a person can throw himself and hence discover his true nature; the freedom to step courageously into the openness of interpersonal relationships, thereby revealing himself as he truly is, and encountering and accepting others on the same ground; finally, and most important, the recognition of the universe as primarily a human place to be

³⁸Hofmann, p. viii.

³⁹*Religion and Mental Health: A Casebook with Commentary and An Essay on Pertinent Literature* (New York: Harper and Brother, 1961); Editor, *Making the Ministry Relevant* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960); *Discovery of Freedom* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969)

⁴⁰Hofmann, *Making the Ministry Relevant*, p. viii.

⁴¹Hofmann, p. ix. In my estimation, this is the same concern that Loder had throughout his life. How do we preserve humanity in the face of the dehumanizing forces of the impersonal consumerist, technological culture of the West? These are still pertinent questions.

constantly recreated in the light of man's understanding of himself." Like Loder, we find Hofmann calling for the inclusion of a "human factor" in grasping the nature and meaning of human life.⁴²

The value of human life is embedded in the Judaic-Christian tradition and yet it is precisely the traditions of religion, particularly the church, that Hofmann sees as guilty of not serving the needs of humanity. The church has the resources to rehumanize humanity through the proclamation and living out of the Gospel. Instead, the church withholds its service to humanity by trying to meet their psychological needs rather than of opening people up to the wider meaning of their lives seen within the light of God. In a biting attack upon the American church of 1960's suburbia that has sold its soul to psychoanalysis and pop-psychology masking as theology (even more apropos today), Hofmann wrote:

[T]he church has sheepishly followed the withdrawal of the human being from critical leadership in commerce and industry into a suburban escape where it can soothe its painful loss of self-confidence. The sermons and the counseling sessions of our contemporary pastors are full of petty trivialities which have to be blown up into disproportionate problems because we are neither willing to face our real problems, nor have we felt the presence of any resources to deal with our profoundest predicament. The minister, lacking such resources, turns in his bankruptcy to psychologically phrased sermons and psychologized counseling techniques. It is disastrous that the Christian church should so enviously have borrowed - and without any critical judgment - the psychiatric and psychological insights and methods which, in themselves, are merely the result of our inability to tackle our problem in the broader context in which they have arisen. Because of their immoderate dependence on psychiatry and psychology, the churches have been driven to consider the individual instead of the community as a whole, the latter being, in fact their proper function. The human being, therefore, finds nothing but his irreversible dependence, without knowing what he can depend on in order to regain his dignity and active forcefulness in dealing with his life situation.⁴³

There needs to be a change in "outlook," the title Hofmann gives to this chapter, by encouraging ministers to give up the notion that they are "religious caretakers, priests or teachers . . . pretend[ing] to have the answer to the riddles of human life." Instead, their "task is to be critical and to sharpen the doubts of their parishioners on everything they have automatically accepted on the word of the church."⁴⁴

The task of the clergy is to throw their congregations into conflict, creating a healthy tension whereby the people will be forced to think through and realize for themselves the particular resources

⁴²Hofmann, p. 7. Given his interest in existentialism and psychology, it is not surprising that Hofmann was familiar with Kierkegaard and would have guided Loder towards him.

⁴³Hofmann, p. 9. This assault is reminiscent of Kierkegaard's *Attack Upon "Christendom,"* (1854-1855), Translated, with an Introduction and Notes, by Walter Lowrie; New Translation by Howard A. Johnson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972.)

⁴⁴Hofmann, p. 11.

available to them directly from God. Ministers need to crack open the lives of their parishioners, help them become aware of their drives, and irrepressible urges. "Human life awareness begins with the elemental questions of 'why' and 'what for.' The very asking of these is the breath of human dignity."⁴⁵

It is at this point that Hofmann offers his understanding of the Christian faith, of how it defines and speaks to the human situation. Christian faith:

States, arrogantly enough, that there is a creative force behind all life which may be conceived as personal and as God and which realizes itself through the very human beings who ask questions about the direction and purpose of their lives. It is said to be a self-revealing force, which does not float freely and unobtainably in the blue sky, nor does it rest forever untapped in the depths of the earth. Through the flesh and blood of average citizens, who have no claim to fame, and to whom Nietzsche referred as those 'much too many,' this force will break through into an organizing factor which will finally defy all the self-appointed military, political and business empires of this world.⁴⁶

This force is the "force of life," which is also the "force of love, that restructures and reorganizes human life, the very life of which humanity intentionally tries to organize out of existence, a force "which powerfully enters the human life and takes man by surprise, but so vehemently that he is compelled to abandon his well-guarded self-protection and, in this way, becomes valuable to others, who, in turn, can afford to respond."⁴⁷ He believed that the God was actively present in the lives of women and men and doing something significant in and with their lives. We discover this through "communion" or relationship with God, in the act of breathing itself. "Life, since it is always relation and relationship to the source of life (whether this relationship is consciously accepted or denied), depends on being rooted in a life which is lasting."⁴⁸

⁴⁵Hofmann, p. 12. "But what good does it do to ask a question to which there is no immediate answer? It must not be forgotten that the real drive for discovery, which has made science and technology so great in the immediate past, was always in the search for the unknown. Curiosity and not security is the clue to a better future. Even though there is no absolute answer, it is only the straight-forward desire to find out those things which are not yet within the orbit of our manipulation that will further our progress. What gives us the confidence to explore the unknown? (p. 12)"

⁴⁶Hofmann, p. 12.

⁴⁷Hofmann, p. 13.

⁴⁸Hofmann here foreshadows Loder's *analogia spiritus*, the inter-relationship of the Christian life constituted by the Holy Spirit's relationship with the human spirit. "Communion is the event in which God's own breath of life makes man recognize that the bare fact of his being alive is significant in itself and is based on the other fact that God not only gives life but lives in him. This recognition, arising from God's intervention in man's own life through the Holy Spirit, is not merely chaotic or instinctual upheaval in man's self-awareness, but is rather his confrontation with the precise intention of God's own life-giving." This intention is demonstrated exhaustively in the "life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ literally personifies the life intention of God." Hofmann alludes

This force is democratic in that it moves through the world freely and indiscriminately, but also with extreme particularity. Christian faith for the individual does not entail simply uncritically adopting the doctrines and confessions of the past as a whole. The individual must pose the question "why" and "what for." Because when these questions are asked of God, the force of God's love might come with an answer that requires the abandonment of his or her "well-guarded self-protection."⁴⁹ The expressions or individual responses to that love-experience will be particular, in that they take into account the unique personality of the individual. "Most certainly life is always fore-given," Hofmann writes. "But it is not our life until we take its mystery and promise more seriously and abandon the old ideas and illusions we may have had about it. Any religion which promotes an old-fashioned imagery and doctrinal concepts for their own sake is a disgrace, but Christianity, which does it directly contrary to the wish of its own founder who himself had to fight religious complacency, defensiveness and exclusiveness, is doubly disgraced."⁵⁰

Reform of the pastorate must begin with theological education. Here the connection between Hofmann and Loder is obvious. In many ways, Loder's career at Princeton Seminary in practical or pastoral theology can be seen as an extension of some of Hofmann's concern to reform the way we understand the nature of Christian theology, ministry, and discipleship. It is fitting to close this section on Hofmann with a look at his critique of both theological education and education within the church, viewpoints that will be later shared by Loder.

We, the theological educators ourselves, lack the imagination to explore life on its own terms or even to compare religious attitudes of the past with contemporary Christianity. We ourselves do not believe in the immediacy and effectiveness of our faith and therefore hide behind the ruins of our doctrinal systems, liturgical customs and ecclesiastical offices. We do not have the courage to be as empty-handed and unpretentious as our colleagues in science are and evidently can afford to be. We robe ourselves in the assumed authority of God, and constantly confuse innate human respect for the sovereignty of real life with an idol that merely promotes our own theological presuppositions and religious bias.

to John 5:24: "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." See "Immortality or Life," *Theology Today* 15 (1958): 242.

⁴⁹Hofmann wanted to explore human experiences that were "true to life." The Christian experience touches the core of human life and within the Christian tradition there is "the power of the Holy Spirit to regenerate people through merciful judgment and a loving challenge to grow through suffering into a stronger and deeper faith." *Religion and Mental Health*, p. 15.

⁵⁰Hofmann, p. 14. "Every single parishioner in this sense," Hofmann continues, "potentially re-creates the Christian faith in his search for and discovery of meaning. The minister is the leader of this movement. He channels the forces against their hopeless resignation in the face of a situation which seems too overpowering to overcome. And it is precisely here that the hypothesis of the Christian faith can be supremely tested. This is the task of pastoral theology. (p. 14)"

Theological education must center in and be justified by a pastoral theology which represent the challenge of contemporary life to religious tradition. Instead of turning ourselves into irrelevant scholars of a faith which never pretended to be academic and which cannot survive such academic self-consciousness, we should enlist young men to join us in finding out where that God, of whom we speak so all to frequently, is at work today. If he is, as we say, sovereign and free, he will always take us by surprise by being more human than we dare to be or expect him to be.⁵¹

While Loder's goal was to bring academic sophistication and rigor to the philosophy of Christian education, it was all done for the sake of the individual to come to grips for oneself with the "height, and breadth, and depth" of the Christian Gospel, to crack open the ego, and allow it to anticipate the transforming work of the Spiritual Presence of Christ, as Loder did.

B. The Personalist Tradition

Hofmann's anthropological considerations, his critique of the institutional church, his openness to the power and presence of God in the world engaging, critiquing, encountering, and redeeming human existence in many ways reflect the Christian personalist theology of his mentor Emil Brunner. The Hofmann-Brunner connection opens up themes and patterns that help to put Loder's work in a larger historical perspective. But I would also push this analogy further by suggesting that Loder's thought can be placed within the wider theological perspective of themes associated with the Christian personalist movement in theology. Doing so provides a helpful rubric for the appropriation and interpretation of his *oeuvre*. We know that Loder read Brunner at Princeton.⁵² Beyond the reference to *The Scandal of Christianity*, mentioned above, there is no explicit connection with Brunner, but implicit in Loder's work is a personalism that echoes Brunner, no doubt reinforced and mediated through Hofmann. What is important to note here is that Loder's emphasis upon the relational dynamic of the Christian life, a relationality that creates a space for the "I," plants him firmly in the personalist tradition. A tradition that runs back through Brunner and through him to Kierkegaard. Let us briefly unpack this connection.

Personalism as a philosophical and theological perspective blossomed in the early twentieth century, from seeds firmly planted in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In an extensive history of this movement, *The Philosophy of Personalism* (1927), Albert C. Knudson identifies Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) as perhaps the first to use the term (*Personalismus*) in 1799 as a synonym for theism, in contradistinction to pantheism. J. Goethe (1749-1832) referred

⁵¹Hofmann, pp. 14-15.

⁵²Brunner was the most widely read theologian at Princeton in the 1950's. Today, Barth has a commanding presence at the seminary.

to the celebrated theist, Friedrich Heinrich H. Jacobi (1743-1819), as a "personalist."⁵³ Apart from these early references, the term did not emerge in English usage until the latter part of the nineteenth century. The word did not enter into common usage until after 1900.⁵⁴

In the natural sciences, the promotion of scientific materialism as advanced by evolutionary theory, combined with the dehumanizing effects of industrial and technological "progress" witnessed throughout the nineteenth century, posed considerable threats to the identity and function of the individual in society. The emergence of these ideas threatened human dignity. In the *History of European Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, written near the turn of the last century, J. T. Merz saw "the problem of Personality" as the most significant philosophical concern of his age. Taking up Mertz' claim, Clement C. J. Webb (1865-1954) sought to tackle this problem in *God and Personality*, the Gifford Lectures of 1918 and 1919:

Whether we are exploring the nature of the world of objects in the presence of which we stand or tracing to its origin our consciousness of that world, we shall meet at last confronting us in our path this mystery of Personality. For, on the one hand, it is only through Personality - through our intercourse with persons quickening in us a personal response - that . . . we gain in the earliest period of our earthly existence that entry into a world of Reality, which enables us to distinguish our self from a not-self; and, on the other hand, [citing Merz], "Personality always impresses us as the most powerful instance of individual existence."⁵⁵

Seemingly heeding Merz' request, within the first five years of the last century three works appeared in France, Germany, and the United States which took up this idea as its theme. In 1903, the French philosopher, Charles Renouvier (1815-1903) published *Le Personnalisme*; William Stern (1871-1938) published the first volume of what he called "Critical Personalism," entitled *Person und Sache: System der philosophischen Weltanschauung (Person and Thing)* in 1906 (the second volume appeared in 1918, the third in 1924); the American, Borden Parker Bowne (1847-1910) summarized thirty years of philosophical reflection on this subject in his work, *Personalism* (1908).⁵⁶

⁵³Used in Schleiermacher's *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* (1799), cited in Albert C. Knudson, *The Philosophy of Personalism: A Study in the Metaphysics of Religion* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1927), p. 17.

⁵⁴For example, John Oman's (1860-1939) translation of Schleiermacher's *Speeches* in 1893 did not render the German "*Personalismus*" into English. See Knudson, pp. 17-18. Cf. Oman's personalist relationalism in *Grace and Personality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925), pp.80-90.

⁵⁵J. T. Merz, *History of European Thought in the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1896-1914), quoted in Clement C. J. Webb, *God and Personality* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1918), pp. 22-23.

⁵⁶Knudson, p. 18-19. Cf. Stern's, *General Psychology from a Personalist Standpoint* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1979).

German theology, as seen in the work of Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889) and Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923), responded to this crisis of the person by explaining that spirit and matter are two distinct realities. The reality of spirit was valued over matter because spirit was the realm of freedom, and freedom is constitutive of what it means to be human. At the University of Heidelberg in the summer semester of 1912 and the winter semester of 1912-1913, Troeltsch lectured on Schleiermacher's *Glaubenslehre* (*The Christian Faith*) and suggested that one of the unique historical contributions of Christianity in the development of religion was "the Christian principle." "We define the Christian principle – which will serve as the basis for all subsequent discussion – in this way: Christianity is the general, decisive breakthrough in principle to a religion of personality, opposed to all naturalistic and anti-personalistic understandings of God."⁵⁷ Whether or not Troeltsch was correct in his reading of Schleiermacher is debatable. Such a reading probably says more about the historical and philosophical concerns of Troeltsch.⁵⁸ The annihilation of Western optimism in human potential and the dehumanizing experiences in the trenches of the Great War (1914-1918) forced theologians to reconsider the question of anthropology. The post-war period witnessed an explosion of interest in a theological exploration of what it means to be a person, as evidenced most noticeably by Webb's *God and Personality*, the Gifford Lectures of 1918 and 1919.⁵⁹

From the viewpoint of the personalist, the idea of the person is "ontological ultimate and for which personality is thus the fundamental explanatory principle."⁶⁰ Apart from the atheistic personalism associated with J. M. E. McTaggart (1866-1925), the majority of thinkers writing in this

⁵⁷Ernst Troeltsch, *The Christian Faith*, trans. Garrett E. Paul (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), p. 63. The lectures were published posthumously by Marta Troeltsch in 1925. On determining the "essence of Christianity" within a context of historical development see Troeltsch's response to Adolf von Harnack's (1851-1930), *What is Christianity?* [1900], "What Does 'Essence of Christianity' Mean?" [1903 & 1913] in Robert Morgan and Michael Pye, eds., *Ernst Troeltsch: Writings on Theology and Religion* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1977), pp. 124-181.

⁵⁸See Bruce L. McCormack, "What Has Basel to Do with Berlin? Continuities in the Theologies of Barth And Schleiermacher," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, XXXIII (2002), pp. 162-163.

⁵⁹Webb writes: "If before [the Great War] there was no proof of the existence of a personal God who can hear our prayers, no reasonable probability that consciousness survives bodily death, the intensity of our private sorrows and the recrudescence of ancient habits cannot alter the laws of evidence. But I am not now concerned to defend the change of attitude towards the problem of Personality of which the war has been the occasion; only to note it as an additional reason for attempting at this time to make up our minds what we ought to think about that problem itself (p. 30)." See also John Macmurray's (1891-1960), *The Self as Agent* (Volume I of *The Form of the Personal*) Introduction by Stanley M. Harrison (London: Faber and Faber, 1995)

⁶⁰John H. Lavey in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Volume 5 (New York: Macmillan Publishing & The Free Press, 1967), pp. 107ff.

tradition were theistic, specifically Christian.⁶¹ Indeed, during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries, the word "personalism" had become for many a synonym for theism. Knudson deemed, "Personalism is in a pre-eminent sense the philosophy of religion of our day. It may indeed be said to be the most thoroughgoing philosophical expression that Christianity has yet received."⁶²

Personalism emerges from within a Christian context due to the significance given to the person in Christian thought. Knudson writes, "Christianity concentrated upon the distinctively personal element in God and the human soul as had not been done before."⁶³ Webb makes the point that it "is so often taken for granted . . . that the Personality of God is a principal tenet of Christianity that it is not without surprise that we find this expression not only entirely absent from the historical creeds and confessions of the Christian Church, but even, until quite modern times, in the estimation of all but the minority of Christians who reject the doctrine of the Trinity, regarded as unorthodox." Yet, any consideration of the doctrine of the Trinity makes abundantly clear that the words "person" and "personality" came to refer to the nature of God.⁶⁴ This personal, Divine Being, exists in a unique relation with humanity, with persons. The analogy of person-to-person relating served as a framework by which one might understand the relationship between humanity and God. "The mutual relation of persons," writes Webb, "seems to be that which bears by far the closest resemblance to the relation of the personal Soul to the Supreme Reality which we call Religion."⁶⁵

Personalism can be characterized as a "vital awareness," an intense awareness of one's experience of life in all of its complexity. It is a form of "protest against being treated as a cog in a wheel or an object to be exploited." Subjectivity is preferred over objectivity. Subjectivity is discovered through a relation or encounter with an *other* within the context of love and mutual intimacy. Personalism values the experience of the self as he/she engages reality and in that

⁶¹Cf. McTaggart's *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology* (1901) and *Some Dogmas of Religion* (1906).

⁶²Knudson, pp. 21, 247. "This does not, however, mean that every Christian must be a personalist in philosophy. (p. 247)"

⁶³Knudson, p. 21. Thus making "the central idea of personalism, the unique significance of personality, [owing] its origin to Christian influence (p. 21)." The idea of the person was not lacking in Greek philosophy, but took on greater meaning in Christian thought as the church wrestled theologically with the Trinitarian nature of God. Yet, given Knudson's tribute to Christian thought as providing the philosophical foundation for personalism, he does not attribute the influences of personalism within Christian theology.

⁶⁴Webb, p. 61. See also John D. Zizioulas (b. 1931), *Being As Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1993), pp. 27-65. "The person both as a concept and as a living reality is purely the product of patristic thought. Without this, the deepest meaning of personhood can neither be grasped nor justified/ (p. 27)"

⁶⁵Clement C. J. Webb, *Divine Personality and Human Life* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1920), p. 192.

engagement with reality, which includes an encounter with God, one comes to affirm the value of human experience, affirms the value and worth of the person.⁶⁶

C. The Personalist-Relationalism of Hamann, Kierkegaard, Ebner & Brunner

The theological personalism that we find in Brunner (and echoed in both Hofmann and Loder), has its origins in the consideration of personality with the added dimension of relationality. The value of the person is affirmed, but the being of a person is understood relationally instead of statically. One's identity is granted through a relationship with an *other*. In 1812, the largely unknown Swedish thinker, E. G. Geiger (?-?) made the remarkably prescient insight that, "There is no personality, except it be in and through another, no thou, no I. Therefore the highest antithesis is by no means I and non-I, but I and another I - I and thou."⁶⁷ Before Geiger, we find in the writings of Johann Georg Hamann (1730-1788) one who sought to explore his identity, his existence in light of his own encounter with the presence of God.

Hamann is pivotal in the emergence of Christian personalism. Although he was a close friend to Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and fellow native of Königsberg, Hamann made a decisive break with Kant after a religious experience in London while traveling on business. The experience lasted over several hours. One evening as he was reading through scripture, the characters of the Bible became real for him, he found himself *within* the narrative and *beyond* the narrative, before the presence of God, a presence who lovingly encountered him, even as the nature of his existence was radically called into question. Instead of losing himself, in what Loder would describe as a convictional experience, he found his being affirmed and valued. Hamann described this experience as "a dynamic assertion of my own existence as lived in the presence of God's Word."⁶⁸ This "dynamic assertion" persisted throughout his life and came to define every aspect of his life. "Man by himself is a question needing an answer," wrote Hamann, "an emptiness waiting to be filled." Alone, humanity cannot answer the question. It must be found outside the self, but experienced in and through the self. The answer is found by an intensive questioning, a turning inward, a "descent

⁶⁶Knudson, pp. 17ff, 247ff; John Baillie, *Our Knowledge of God* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), especially Chapter V, "The Other Who Is Most Near," pp. 219ff. Bernard Häring, *The Christian Existentialist: The Philosophy and Theology of Self-Fulfillment in Modern Society* (New York: New York University Press, 1968), pp. 2-30.

⁶⁷Paul K. Jewett, "Ebnerian Personalism and Its Influence Upon Brunner's Theology," *Westminster Theological Journal*, 14 (1951-1952): 115.

⁶⁸Quoted in Ronald Gregor Smith, *J. G. Hamann (1730-1788): A Study in Christian Existence with Selections from His Writings* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), p. 41.

into hell, the hell of self-knowledge. . . which is the only way to being one with God.”⁶⁹ Knowledge about the world, God, and one’s self cannot be attained through rationalism alone. One cannot think one’s way into a relationship with God. In a letter to Johann Gotthelf Linder (1729-1766), Hamann wrote, “I have no aptitude for truths, principles, systems; but for crumbs, fragments, fancies, sudden inspirations.”⁷⁰ Instead, Hamann believe the Christian life entails “the encounter of the whole man through self-knowledge with the living truth of the Spirit.”⁷¹

Hamann’s thought had a profound influence upon Kierkegaard. In fact, R. G. Smith sees in “embryonic or sibylline form at least, all the major concerns” that Kierkegaard addressed in his lifetime.⁷² A direct line can be made from Kierkegaard to Brunner, which combined with the influence of Ferdinand Ebner (1882-1931), produced a unique expression of Christian personalism.

Brunner’s personalism was a strong response to the influence of critical idealism upon theological considerations pervasive in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, an idealism that left no room for the self.⁷³ In *Der Mittler (The Mediator)*, written in 1927, Brunner presents a biting critique of the Christologies offered by Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), Adolf von Harnack, and Albrecht Ritschl, who saw little need of a mediator to offer salvation because sin and guilt were removed from an understanding of the human condition.⁷⁴ The pervasive rationalism and moralism in these Christologies distorted the personal element of Jesus. Jesus was not the embodiment of an eternal idea, nor was he some kind of super hero to emulate. “When a man’s real belief in Christ consists in regarding Him as leader, hero, the *primus inter pares*, the highest point in the history of religion, the loftiest peak in the moral and religious history of humanity,” Brunner forcefully avers, “he would do better, for the sake of simplicity and truth, to renounce the use of the terms Christ, Son of God, Redeemer, Mediator, Reconciler, for all these terms mean something quite

⁶⁹Hamann in Smith, p. 41.

⁷⁰Hamann’s letter of 12th October 1759 quoted in Smith, p. 22. “System is itself a hindrance to the truth (p. 23).”

⁷¹Hamann quoted in Smith, p. 53. See also Gwen Griffith Dickson, *Johann Georg Hamann’s Relational Metacriticism* (Berlin: Walter deGruyter, 1995). Hamann’s statement could also serve as a fitting summary of Loder’s understanding of the Christian life.

⁷²Smith, p. 18.

⁷³Alistair E. McGrath, *The Making of Modern German Christology, 1750-1990*, second edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), p. 145.

⁷⁴Emil Brunner, *The Mediator: A Study of the Central Doctrine of the Christian Faith*, Translated by Olive Wyon (New York: Macmillan Company, 1942), pp. 46-71; McGrath, p. 145.

different.”⁷⁵ Neither are appeals to ethical stringency salvific, because the struggle to be moral is merely a futile attempt of the isolated self to achieve what can only be given through Jesus Christ. Thus, “even morality is only intercourse with oneself, *Ichseinsamkeit* (solitude of the self),” quoting Ferdinand Ebner. “It is self-love, self-regard. Nothing save a real relation to a real “*Thou*” can dispel this solitude of the soul; only a real conversation, in which we are actually addressed by another person, can make us responsible [i. e. - morally responsible]; this alone would be absolutely timely, personal, and therefore wholly serious.”⁷⁶ Jesus is a person, a *Thou*, who addresses the self and calls the self into redemptive being.

For Brunner the Christian life involves an encounter (*Begegnung*) with the Living God revealed in the face of Jesus Christ.⁷⁷ The encounter is a “personal correspondence,” person to Person.⁷⁸ What we learn through the dialog with God is not ideas about God, instead we are confronted with God Himself in Jesus Christ. We are given what Paul called, “the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthian 3).”

Brunner’s personalism was significantly shaped by the work of Ferdinand Ebner, who can take the claim of being the founder of the “I-Thou” philosophy. “I-Thou” personalist philosophy is primarily associated with Martin Buber’s (1878-1965) well-known *Ich und Du* (*I and Thou*) published in 1923.⁷⁹ However, it was Ebner’s *Das Wort und die geistigen Realitäten*, *Pneumatologische Fragmente* (*The Word and Spiritual Realities: Pneumatological Fragments*)

⁷⁵Brunner, p. 79.

⁷⁶Brunner, pp. 208-209.

⁷⁷Cf. Brunner’s lectures of 1938, *Wahrheit als Begegnung* (*Truth as Encounter/ The Divine-Human Encounter*), a slim volume, but containing some of Brunner’s most creative proposals and applications of a personalist theology.

⁷⁸McGrath, p. 147. In his “Intellectual Autobiography,” Brunner wrote that “above all, the Christian concept of truth, truth as encounter, revelation conceived as God’s self-communication dominates and permeates the treatment of every single theological topic.” I. John Hesselink, who studied under Brunner, also notes the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl (1869-1938) as also being a source of Brunner’s personalism. “Emil Brunner: A Centennial Perspective,” *Christian Century*, (13th December 1989), p. 1171.

⁷⁹*I and Thou* (Leipzig: Insel-Verlag) appeared two years after Ebner’s work. A notation towards the end explains that a sketch of the work was first made in 1916, followed by a first draft in the fall of 1919, with the final composition completed in the spring of 1922. See also his stress upon a concrete, individual human being over “humanity” in general in Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929), *The Star of Redemption*, Translated by William W. Hallow (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 1985). Written between 1918 and 1919, and although critical of Buber’s understanding of Judaism, Rosenzweig also stands in the personalist tradition, influenced by Wilhelm von Humboldt and the dialectic of Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872). Feuerbach said that true dialectics “is not a monologue between a lonely thinker and himself but a dialogue between I and Thou.(p. xiv-xv)”

published in 1921, and thus predating Buber, that articulated a Christian personalist view that had such a profound impact upon Brunner's thinking.⁸⁰ Before we turn to Brunner, let us briefly consider Ebner.

Ebner makes the fundamental claim that human personality "always consists in the existence of the I in relation to the Thou."⁸¹ His personalist, "I-Thou" philosophy was primarily influenced by the writings of Kierkegaard and fully acknowledges his debt to him. Ebner was also shaped by explorations in the philosophy of language as advanced by Johann Georg Hamann (1730-1788), Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835), and J. Grimm's (1785-1863) *Deutsche Mythologie* (1844).⁸² In *Das Wort*, Ebner summarizes his primary thesis in this way:

Presupposed that human existence in its kernel has a spiritual significance, viz., a significance which is not exhausted in its natural manifestation in the course of a world event; presupposed that one may speak of something spiritual in man otherwise than in the sense of a fiction of a poetic or metaphoric nature, or of a fiction demanded on "social" grounds: then this spiritual something is essentially defined thereby that it is fundamentally connected with something spiritual outside of it, through which and in which it exists. An evidence, and indeed an 'objectively' tangible evidence, of this connection with a relation of such a sort and one that is therefore accessible to objective knowledge is to be found in the fact that man is a speaking being, that he has the 'Word.' He does not, however, have the word on a natural or social basis. Society, in the human sense, is not the presupposition of speech, but rather itself has this as the presupposition of its existence, the word lodged in man. If then, in order to have a word for it, we call this spiritual entity *in* man, I, and that which is *outside* of him, in relationship to which the 'I' exists, thou, we must remember that this I and this thou are given to us precisely *through* the word and *in* it, in its 'inwardness'; not, however, as empty words in which dwell no relationship to reality - as they naturally appear in their abstract, substantive and substantialized usage; but rather as a word that 'reduplicates' its content and real form in the concreteness and actuality of its being pronounced in and through the situation created by speech.⁸³

⁸⁰Ebner sees in Hamann's view of the interaction between the believer and the Word as a kind of Christian personalism. See Smith, p. 18. Brunner relates that it was the work of Friderich Gogarten (1887-1967) who first had an appreciation for Ebner, and sparked his own interest in the personal dimension of Christian experience. He also credits Eberhard Grisebach's (1880-1945) *Die Grenzen des Erziehers*, and especially his *Gegenwart, eine kritische Ethik* which he called "bahnbrechend [pioneering]." See Brunner, *Das Gebot und die Ordnungen* (Tübingen: Verlag von J. c. b. Mohr, 1932), p. 571, note 12 cited in Jewett, p. 119.

⁸¹*Das Wort und die geistigen Realitäten, Pneumatologische Fragmente*, (Innsbruck: Brenner Verlag, 1921), p. 36 cited in Baillie, p. 208.

⁸²John W. Hart, *Karl Barth vs. Emil Brunner: The Formation and Dissolution of a Theological Alliance, 1916-1936* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), pp. 39-40.

⁸³Ferdinand Ebner, *Das Wort und die geistigen Realitäten, Pneumatologische Fragmente* (Innsbruck: Brenner Verlag), p. 12 cited in Jewett, pp. 115-116. Theologian Karl Heim (1874-1958) called Ebner's *Das Wort* a "Copernican act." See J. Cullberg, *Das Du und die Wirklichkeit* (Uppsala, Universitets Årsskrift, 1933), p. 39, cited in Jewett, p. 115. Regarding Ebner, Jewett writes, "For none

Let us unpack this statement.

Three critical observations can be made. First, human existence for Ebner is spiritual existence. Not a spiritual identity divorced from material form, but spiritual in the sense that human existence becomes truly a human existence through humanity's relationship with some "thing" outside of it. This spiritual identity of humanity he calls, *I*. There can be no sense of identity, no "I," no grasp of existence detached from that which is outside of it. Spiritual existence is "directed fundamentally to a relationship with something spiritual *outside* of it, *through* which and in *which* it exists (emphasis added)." Human existence is spiritual because it has the capacity to be in a dialogical relationship with that which is not human. Second, as an other, this spiritual identity outside of humanity Ebner calls *thou*. The relationship with the *thou* is primary and fundamental because the *I* possesses a relationship to itself only through its relationship with *thou*. Finally, the ground or bearer of this relationship, the means by which the dialog between *I* and *thou* occur is through the spoken word or speech. In Ebner's Logosophy, the dialog conveys a Word, but the Word is not something, but a *person*.⁸⁴ In the dialogical exchange, through speech, *I* and *thou* relate.⁸⁵ Speech creates the relationship and the relationship exists *between* the *I* and *thou*, in the space created between the dialog partners, through the exchange. In the relationship with *thou*, the *I* is maintained and defined, without becoming enmeshed in the other. The uniqueness and particularity of the *I* is sustained even as it is being shaped by the other.

Thus, Ebner suggests that God is not an idea realized through speculation. God is known relationally. He argues that, "Either God has a personal existence, or he does not exist at all. One cannot grasp his personality, however, in a speculative way, but only thereby, that one relate oneself to him personally - which is the requirement of man's spiritual life and of God -, viz. that one makes him the *Thou* of his *I*, and at that point all speculation and all theological metaphysical profundity have *eo ipso* ceased."⁸⁶ What is offered in the experience is not ideas about God, but a personal confrontation by God. As we shall see, these are themes that stand at the heart of Loder's thinking.

Ebner's work is in many ways an extension of Kierkegaard's desire to affirm the value of the individual. In the face of Hegelian idealism where the individual was lost in the supra-individual, the absolute Self, Kierkegaard insisted that the human *ich* cannot be confused with the divine *Ich*.

other, with the exception of Kierkegaard, does Brunner express such unstinted appreciation. (p. 115)"

⁸⁴See Hart, pp. 39-40.

⁸⁵According to Ebner it was J. G. Hamann and Wilhelm von Humboldt, who grasped the significance of speech in its spiritual roots as having divine origin. *Das Wort*, p. 16 cited in Jewett, p. 116.

⁸⁶*Das Wort*, p. 168 cited in Jewett, p. 121.

Kierkegaard's work sought to sustain concrete human existence. The human *ich* engages the world subjectively and realizes the objective thinking, who knows the whole world, but loses himself. The relationality or fellowship (*Gemeinschaft*) inherent in Ebner would appear to be at odds with Kierkegaard's stress upon the Individual, hence the value of *Existenz*. Yet, the Individual, as Jewett correctly points out, is never an "epistemologically autonomous, metaphysically independent being." The Individual who exists in space and time is addressed by God in the moment. "Never is he more alone, more the Individual, than in that moment, but never is he less alone than when so alone with God."⁸⁷ The Kierkegaardian view of the Individual becomes in Brunner, as mediated through Ebner, a Person confronted by the divine Thou. Jewett helpfully summarizes this connection in noting that the "mediation of time and eternity in the individual in the passionate decision of the moment (Kierkegaard) . . . furnishes the fundamental structure for Brunner's divine-human encounter. The constant appropriation of which Kierkegaard speaks, his emphasis on subjective truth (*Existenz*), in distinction to objective truth, becomes for Brunner, following Ebner, a fellowship-founding, personal encounter. It-truth (*Es-Wahrheit*) and thou-truth (*Du-Wahrheit*) or truth as encounter (*Wahrheit als Begegnung*)" are all themes, as we shall see, which flow from Kierkegaard, "the source of this new thinking," notes Brunner, "the greatest Christian thinker of modern times."⁸⁸

Thus, we find in Brunner a *relational* personalism. The Christian faith is understood as a personal correspondence between the divine *Du* and the human *Ich*. The Bible gives an account of this relationship between God and humanity, about this "*indissoluble two-sided, yet never interchangeable and in a specific sense one-sided, relation between them.*"⁸⁹ Certainly not a relationship between equals because, "God is always and inconvertibly the first, man always and inconvertibly the second in this relation," yet there is a reciprocity.⁹⁰ Thus rejecting Anicius Boethius's (480- 524) well-known definition of the person as an individual substance of a rational nature (*Persona est naturae rationabilis individua substantia*), Brunner unabashedly affirmed, "All

⁸⁷Jewett, p. 120. Cf. *NRC* in which Loder suggests that "Kierkegaard's individualism is set in the context of his concern to speak to organized and institutionalized Christianity. This puts his analysis of individual experience in the perspective of his concern for all Christendom which he said constituted the background for the extensive self-analysis in which he engaged (p. 24)."

⁸⁸Brunner, *The Divine-Human Encounter*, p. 57. Cf. Brunner's tribute to Kierkegaard, as well as Hamann in *Dogmatics, Volume I: The Christian Doctrine of God*, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950), p. 100, 7.

⁸⁹Brunner, *The Divine-Human Encounter*, p. 33. Italics in the text.

⁹⁰Brunner, p. 33.

personality is a being in relationship."⁹¹ Humanity is "God's counterpart, face to face with himself," created for fellowship with God.⁹² Apart from this face-to-face interaction, humanity is lost in that it receives no mirroring reflection. The individual cannot see oneself, because one has lost the face of encounter. Thus, faith in the New Testament, as Brunner understands it "is that total self-giving, that complete renunciation of one's own security, that utter dependence, which is only possible face to face with one whose being and acts are such that face to face with him one *can* afford to renounce his own security." He continues:

Man stays concealed in his secure hiding place, secreted behind the walls of his I-castle; and nothing can really entice him out until one meets him who overcomes all the mistrust and anxiety about his very existence which drives him into self-security and there imprisons him. Man remains imprisoned in himself until the one meets him who can free him, who can break down his system of defences, so that he can surrender himself, and in this surrender of self receive what he needs to enable him to abandon his securities; that is to say, until that one comes who gives man the life for which he was created. Only unconditional love, which brings man to self-fulfillment, and therewith gives him true selfhood and eternal life, can call out in him complete, unconditional love.⁹³

The one who meets man and draws him out of his "I-castle" is God in the face of the person, Jesus Christ.

Brunner's relational personalism becomes the heuristic device through which the entire Bible may be interpreted, thus defining the Christian life, "God is thus the God who approached man and man is the man who comes from God, in order that God's will may fulfill itself in man's knowing and voluntary loving and that man's true life may be realized in his voluntarily acknowledging and affirming the divine acting and will. This two-sided but unambiguous relation, this state of dependent-independent creature - to be face to face with God according to His Will - is the fundamental category of the Bible; and in relation to it everything said in the Bible is said and must be understood."⁹⁴

⁹¹*Der Mensch im Widerspruch*, p. 222 cited in Jewett, p. 127. See Boethius' *Contra Eutzychen et Nestorium* quoted in Webb, p. 47.

⁹²Brunner, *The Divine-Human Encounter*, p. 33.

⁹³Brunner, p. 51.

⁹⁴Brunner, p. 46. Cf. also Brunner, *The Divine Imperative: A Study in Christian Ethics*, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1932), pp. 191ff and 302ff. "God does not only will our personalities, He does not only desire to have our personality for Himself, in a personal manner; but he also wants us in such a way as to possess our personal life, our life in relation to society. For only the life which is related organically to society, only the life with the 'Thou,' is personal life. I cannot live personally with 'things.' The 'I' cannot be personal over against an 'it,' but only when it is confronted by the 'Thou.' To live personally means: to live in responsibility and love. This eliminates the abstract, impersonal element from ethics altogether. There are no Ends, Ideas, Goods, Values, no abstract entities, neither Culture, nor the State, nor 'sphere of Spirit' to which the human personal life can be subordinated.

Foremost, the Christian experience is primarily an encounter between God and humanity. The divine Word addresses humanity and calls for a response with our lives. But the address is always to the individual. "It thus happens," Brunner writes, "that . . . a Word of God proclaimed to all the world becomes a Word which encounters *me*, and that, in that it *encounters* me, converts me and *recreates* me. How the Word of God moves from a Word to me to a Word in me: that is the theme of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit."⁹⁵ This is a "realized dimension," that is the "Holy Spirit, the pledge of new life, is a present, creative reality" for the believer.⁹⁶ Thus we move to a brief discussion of Brunner's pneumatology, one that possess a remarkable affinity with what we will find later in Loder's thought.

In a recent study of the relationship between Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, John W. Hart convincingly argues that the dissolution of their friendship had less to do with their disagreement over natural theology than the direction Brunner's thought was taking due to his contact with the Oxford Group Movement. The Oxford Group Movement (OGM) was founded and led by the American, Frank N. D. Buchman (1878-1961). He grew up in a pietistic Swiss-German Lutheran family in eastern Pennsylvania (USA) and was ordained in the Lutheran church in 1902. He went to England in 1907 and attended the Keswick conference at which he experienced a "profound awakening." He returned to the United States and became evangelist, preaching on university campuses, most significantly in Princeton. The OGM described itself as "A First Century Christian Fellowship." It hoped to renew the church, to evangelize the non-Christians through personal contacts, and to realize a "new world order through changed lives." As Buchman defined it, "The Oxford Group is a revolution of God-control where God really guides you and your nation."⁹⁷ Brunner first encountered the OGM on a lecture tour in Princeton in 1928, again in Great Britain, and

There is only one self-end in the sphere of possible experience and it is this: personal life, or community between persons. This is the ethical meaning of the Incarnation, as it is the ethical meaning of the fact that man is made in the image of God. (p. 191)"

⁹⁵*Vom Werk des Heiligen Geistes (On the Work of the Holy Spirit)*, p. 8-9 cited in Hart, p. 198, note 61.

⁹⁶Brunner, *The Divine-Human Encounter*, p. 73.

⁹⁷Frank N. D. Buchman, *Remaking the World* (London: Blanford, 1947), p. 46, cited in Hart, p. 178. Buchman preferred to make contact leaders and notable personalities. Some of the people who came under his sway were J. Ross Stevenson (1866-1939), president of Princeton Theological Seminary, Eric Liddell (1902-1945), the Scottish Olympian and missionary, Paul Tournier (1891- 1986), the Swiss psychologist, Carl J. Hambro, president of the Norwegian Parliament, and the actress Mae West (1892-1980). Hart, p. 193. For a detailed study of the Oxford Group Movement see, Martin Smith and Francis Underhill, *The Group Movement*, (London: SPCK, 1934); Walter H. Clark, *The Oxford Group* (New York: BooTKMan Associates, 1951); and Geoffrey Williamson, *Inside Buchmanism* (London: Watts & Company, 1954). Cf. Tournier's, *The Meaning of Persons* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957).

a third time in Zurich where he had a lengthy conversation with Buchman, experiencing a renewal of his own faith.⁹⁸ Writing in his "Spiritual Autobiography," Brunner confesses that:

The Oxford Group . . . made me aware, for the first time, of the close connection between spiritual reality and fellowship or communion. . . . The I-thou philosophy gave the philosophical, intellectual explanation or interpretation of this extra-intellectual fact. Now, I could see that and why in the New Testament there is such a close connection, if not identity, between communion or fellowship in Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit, in the *ecclesia*. Fellowship was no more a mere ethical attitude but a reality - the reality of God's Holy Spirit among and in men. . . .

This was, at bottom, the same thing which Søren Kierkegaard meant by the word existential. *You cannot understand the Gospel unless you let yourself be personally engaged, which is the same as being challenged by the Thou which you encounter.* This has become since 1938, the lodestar of my theological thinking, first expressed in the little book [*Truth as Encounter*] . . . in 1938. I think it was this which, at bottom, Kutter and Ragaz had in mind when they spoke of a religious socialism. It certainly is what the two Blumhardts had discovered and experienced as the reality of the Holy Spirit as the element of *ecclesia*.⁹⁹

The renewal that Brunner experienced in the OGM was credited not to new philosophical insights or the formation of new theological method, but to the work of the Holy Spirit providing a breath of fresh air through the OGM which was making the Gospel alive for modern people, desperately needed for the institutional European church plagued by a defunct creedalism.¹⁰⁰ "It was not [Kutter and Blumhardt's] thought," Brunner contends, "it was the power of the Holy Spirit manifested in their lives and words which attracted so many and which through Kutter impressed us as the reality of God in our midst. *The origin of the so-called dialectical theology is not theological or philosophical thought, but the wondrous reality of the Holy Spirit.*"¹⁰¹ The OGM provided a

⁹⁸Hart, p. 178, 180. Writing years later, Brunner candidly described seeing a sandwich-board man advertising a restaurant, but who looked like he had not eaten in weeks. "I have been that sandwich-board man. I was advertising a good meal, but I hadn't eaten the meal myself until I met the Oxford Group." Quoted in Hart, p. 195, note 15.

⁹⁹Quoted in Hart, p. 183. Italics in the text. Hermann Kutter (1869-1931), along with Leonhard Ragaz (1868-1948) were proponents of religious socialism. Ragaz was a pastor and professor in Basel before resigning and devoting himself to social work in industrial areas and peace work. Kutter's dialectic theology influenced Ragaz, which impressed itself upon the work of Karl Barth. The pietism of both Johann Christoph Blumhardt (1805-1880) and his son, Christian Blumhardt (1842-1919) shaped dialectical theology. See Eberhard Jüngel, *Karl Barth: A Theological Legacy*, translated by Garrett E. Paul (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), pp. 30ff.

¹⁰⁰See Brunner's, *The Church and the Oxford Group*, trans. by David Cairns (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1937, pp. 106-108. "Meine Begegnung mit der Oxforder Gruppenbewegung" ("Encounter with the Oxford Group Movement") is also another account of Brunner's experience in and with the OGM.

¹⁰¹From Brunner's "Spiritual Autobiography," quoted in Hart, p. 196, note 39.

means to convey dialectical theology to a wider public, to the non-theologian, especially to the person not found in the pew.

It is striking that as a theologian, Brunner would be so critical of the discipline of theology, particularly its inability to speak to the church. A close examination of Brunner's correspondence with Barth in the early 1930's reveals that behind their disagreement over natural theology was a deeper clash over the role of theology and the relationship between the theologian and his/her openness to the presence of the Holy Spirit. Barth was troubled and deeply concerned by Brunner's involvement with the OGM. In a letter to Barth, from October, 1933, Brunner held out the hope and expressed quite candidly that, "Perhaps there will come a time when you will once more have an ear for that which the Group wants - if you understand that we are not blessed through our theology, but only through being-in-Christ. The Groups have brought me closer to this than I have ever been."¹⁰² Uppermost in Brunner's concern is the renewal of faith in the church and in the world, but the way towards that goal is not through theological explorations alone. The Christian was to witness to the presence of Christ actively present in the world today, a witness done more effectively and consistently by the OGM. In fact, Brunner reminds Barth that witnessing is even more important than theology. With brutal honesty and humility Brunner testifies to Barth:

I come again and again to the conviction that our theological work is indeed something very necessary and good (yours *and* mine!), but that the Church is not renewed through it. The renewal of the Church will just as little happen through theology as the growth of the Church did in the time of the Apostles or afterwards. Both proceed on the much simpler way of "establishing the obedience of faith" . . . in some way similar to the way it happens in the Groups.¹⁰³

Under the sway of the OGM, Brunner wrote *Vom Werk des Heiligen Geistes* (*On the Work of the Holy Spirit*), a pamphlet published in 1935 which explores the activity of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life since Pentecost. In addition to Barth's "Nein!" to Brunner's *Nature and Grace*, Brunner's pneumatology, influenced by the OGM, was also another "significant factor," Hart argues, in the firm rejection of Brunner.¹⁰⁴ In *Vom Werk des Heiligen Geistes*, Brunner gives an account of moments that witnessed intense manifestations of the Spirit, which were consequently quenched by what he describes as Church law and theological intellectualism. Brunner sees dialectical theology guilty of similar forms of suppression:

¹⁰²"News has constantly reached me of your co-operation with the Group-Movement (which I have always viewed so thoroughly unsympathetically). . . from which I see once more that you apparently find yourself in a rapid movement whose Spirit and direction have always been strange to me." Barth to Brunner, 1934. See Hart, p. 177.

¹⁰³Hart, p. 185.

¹⁰⁴Hart, pp. 183ff.

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit has also been an embarrassment to it up to now, or it has attempted to go the way of orthodoxy once more by identifying the Word and Spirit. No wonder! For it is always proved in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit how much the reality of faith stands behind theological reflection. This doctrine will always bring to our awareness our own poverty of Spirit. It is the question whether we stand fast in the judgment or whether, through an objectivistic falsification of the New Testament witness [read: Barth], we want to hid our nakedness. It is the excellence precisely of this theological theme that it establishes the point-of-contact [*Berührungspunkt*] of divine revelation and the personal experience of faith.¹⁰⁵

The point-of-contact is the "place" where God is made present and *experienced* in the Christian life. It is the place of encounter, the point of address, the moment when through engagement with the presence of God, one is "fundamentally changed." Significantly, Brunner observes that the Holy Spirit is determined to bring change and renewal in such a way that these moments of transformation do "not cancel the structure of human being, but orders it completely anew."⁸² A new order is experienced which defines the nature of the Christian life, primarily through faith, hope and love. As we shall see, it is here where Loder's pneumatology can be seen as providing greater support for Brunner's theological claim for the "place" of contact.

The point-of-contact question, identifying where and how God and humanity, as it were, touch or relate became a bone of contention between Barth and other dialectical theologians, specifically Brunner. Barth was extremely skeptical of the direction Brunner's thinking was taking him. Barth felt that placing too much emphasis upon the human reception of God's Word was guilty of mistakes that he saw in Schleiermacher's influence upon the liberal theology of Troeltsch and others. There can be no "interpenetration" [*Ineinander*] between the divine spirit of God and the human spirit.¹⁰⁶ A critical space must be maintained to keep them apart. Theology must begin with God as revealed in Jesus Christ and not through an analysis of human experiences of God.¹⁰⁷ In *Romans* (1919), Barth identified fascination with "personality" as the "idol of the century."¹⁰⁸ As a result, he believed theology cannot be a tool for furthering the development of personality.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵*Vom Werk*, p. 8, quoted in Hart, p. 186

¹⁰⁶McCormack, pp. 163-165.

¹⁰⁷McCormack sees Barth's theology "born of an effort to overcome historicism and psychologism in theology. (p. 165)"

¹⁰⁸Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyn (London: Oxford University Press, 1980).

¹⁰⁹Echoing Brunner, Friedrich Gogarten also attacked Barth's position. In "The Problem of a Theological Anthropology," (1929), Gogarten challenged the theological community to address seriously its understanding of what it means to be human. Gogarten writes: I am convinced that one may not follow Schleiermacher on his way for even a single step. . . But today, one cannot avoid a very explicit discussion of the problem of anthropology. Yes, and more than that, I am of the opinion that it is not

By contrast, the personalism in Brunner's thought with its strong Kierkegaardian influence, is brought to bear upon the way he sees the Holy Spirit at work in his life and the way he puts forth a vision of the Christian life. He makes a way for preservation of the "I" who is addressed by the Holy and experienced. Hart, too, points to the Brunner's personalism in observing that this pamphlet "stresses the importance of the individual/existential/subjective/human 'I' in the act of faith."¹⁰ Brunner writes:

The Holy Spirit does not confess Jesus as the Christ, as the Lord. . . The confession is my confession. And the Holy Spirit does not know the Lord; for the Holy Spirit has no Lord to recognize. But: that *I myself*, no one other than I, know and confess the Lord as my Lord - that happens because *God Himself* says to me that He is my Lord, *in Christ through* the Holy Spirit. My subjectness is not "replaced" - that would be mysticism - but Christ gives himself to *me* as the Lord, he makes him Lord to me myself, he restores me myself, without any grounding other than the certainty that I can confess that he is my Lord.¹¹

To be "in Christ," one does lose a sense of "subjectness," there is no dissolution of or melding of the *I* in the presence of God. The Holy Spirit presents Christ and in one's relationship with Christ, the subject, as it were, is freed to be relationship with God. The self is restored through fellowship with Christ. This restoration, this renewal is the gift of the Holy Spirit given to all those who are "in Christ."

This *excursus* through Hoffmann and Brunner might appear to be a detour from our main concern, but just the opposite is the case. This discussion establishes an interpretative framework through which we can view the way Loder's understands the life of a Christian. The personalist-relational themes that surface and develop beginning with Kierkegaard will come to have a formative impact upon Loder. I would place Loder's work in the theological tradition that begins with Kierkegaard (and beyond him to Hamann), and extends through Ebner, Brunner, Hofmann, and eventually to Loder.

A good case can be made for seeing Loder's work as a form of Christian existentialism, especially given the importance of Kierkegaard upon his thought. Indeed, it might appear that Loder's work is really only an elaborate extension of Kierkegaard's thought. There is no doubt, as we shall see, that Loder relies heavily upon Kierkegaard. However, he does so because he sees

possible today to do real theology. . . in any other way than by placing the problem of anthropology in the center of attention. Only when that happens will a theology be created which really achieves that which it is there for, namely to be an aid to the living and public proclamation of God's Word. Friedrich Gogarten, "Das Problem einer theologischen Anthropologie," *Zwischen den Zeiten*, 7 (1929), p. 505, cited in Bruce L. McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909-1936* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 405-406.

¹⁰Hart, p. 186.

¹¹*Vom Werk*, pp. 14-15, quoted in Hart, pp. 186-187.

Kierkegaard's understanding of human existence as providing a rich, generative source for apprehending reality and God. Loder goes well beyond Kierkegaard, particularly in his ability to articulate *how* the God-man encounters the individual. Loder takes the inherent relational patterns in Kierkegaard's thought and brings them to bear upon the way we view every level of creation relationally. This is why I am reluctant to identify Loder with the existentialist tradition, primarily because of its tendency to advocate an individualism or subjectivism which is not in keeping with the Christian experience. To see Kierkegaard as an individualist or subjectivist is to misinterpret him.¹¹² I would suggest that this misreading of Kierkegaard has hindered the reception and apprehension of Loder's work. By identifying himself so closely with Kierkegaard, it is easy to assume that Loder's theology is equally individualistic. Loder wants to affirm the importance of the individual (here the existentialist influence is obvious). But the value of the individual can only be given within the context of a wider relationship that has the power to define and affirm the individual.¹¹³ Kierkegaard and others stressed this point and they did so because it was fundamental to their experience as Christians. This is why I prefer to think of Loder's work within the relational-personalist tradition, certainly informed by Kierkegaard's so-called existentialism, but not synonymous with it.¹¹⁴

For Loder, the Christian life consists of a relationship between the Holy Spirit and human spirit, Spirit-to-spirit, Subject-to-subject, Person-to-person, Freedom-to-freedom. Agreeing with George Hendry (b.1904), Loder believed that "God does not dehumanize humanity or 'un-man' humanity in order to relate to humans. . . .God does not overrule human freedom but engages it in order that the I-Thou of the God-human relationship not be reduced to the I-it order."¹¹⁵ The

¹¹²Søren Kierkegaard, *The Prayers of Kierkegaard*, Edited and with a New Interpretation of His Life and Thought by Perry D. LeFevre (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 164. See LeFevre's critical examination of Kierkegaard's life and thought. Truth as subjectivity, as Kierkegaard claimed, is not subjectivism because the object under consideration, the truth after which one passionately seeks, is not found within. Subjectivity is the passionate, personal engagement with reality, but it is not merely a mirror image of the self. Harvie Ferguson, *Melancholy and the Critique of Modernity: Søren Kierkegaard's Religious Psychology* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 155-157; David J. Gouwens, *Kierkegaard as Religious Thinker* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 43-43; J. Heywood Thomas, *Philosophy of Religion in Kierkegaard's Writings* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1994), p. 47-81; David Law, *Kierkegaard as Negative Theologian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993)

¹¹³See Arnold B. Come's assertion that Kierkegaard is primarily a humanist theologian. *Kierkegaard as Humanist: Discovering My Self* (Buffalo, NY: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995).

¹¹⁴See Loder's entry "Existentialism," in *Harper's Encyclopedia of Religious Education*. Iris V. Cully & Kendig Brubaker Cully, general editors (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), p. 242. "The significance of corporate reality for the existentialist must be found – if it is to be found at all – in religious or theological reality, as in Buber's 'I-Thou' relationship. (p. 241)"

¹¹⁵The reference is to George Hendry, *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology*, Revised and Enlarged Edition (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965). See *LS*, p. 35

Brunnerian echoes are evident. The Christian life is not a mystical union with Christ, as this would cloud the I-Thou relationship where the boundaries and particularities of I and Thou are maintained; instead, the Christian life consists of a fellowship - a *koinonia* - a fellowship that makes present the Spiritual Presence of Christ. To encounter the Spiritual Presence of Christ means to undergo transformation. Beginning with his doctoral dissertation at Harvard, Loder begins to unpack the *how* and the *what* of transformation as he himself experienced it. It is this scrutiny that will preoccupy Loder for the rest of his life: An analysis of the deep structure of transformation.

II. The Harvard Years: Freud & Kierkegaard

Loder left Princeton and followed Hofmann to Harvard University where began developing a methodology for interdisciplinary studies. After receiving a masters of theology degree in 1958, he graduated with his doctorate in practical theology in 1962. Loder finished writing his dissertation as a Danforth Scholar which brought him to the Menninger Psychiatric Clinic in Topeka, Kansas (USA).¹¹⁶ Loder's years at Harvard brought him into contact with the leading intellectuals of his day shaping American theology and culture. He studied with sociologists Talcott Parsons (1902- 1979) and Robert Bellah (b. 1927), theologians Paul Tillich, Harvey Cox (b. 1929), Richard R. Niebuhr (?-?), and James Luther Adams (b.1901); the historian Arthur Darby Nock (1902-1963); the psychologist, David McClelland (1917- 1998), noted for his research on achievement motivation, with interests in personality and consciousness; and Seward Hiltner (b.1908), a leading scholar exploring the interconnection between psychology and theology.¹¹⁷

That Loder would engage in an analysis of the relationship between religion and psychiatry is not surprising given his experience up to this time. At Princeton, under the guidance of Hofmann and the writings of Kierkegaard, Loder struggled to make sense of his convictional experience in a way that was psychologically informed. But there was also an aspect of the experience that could not be "explained" psychologically, that is without doing damage to the theological insights which changed his life and deepened his commitment to Jesus Christ. Loder took his familiarity with Kierkegaard and brought it into dialog with the psychoanalytic tradition of Sigmund Freud (1856-

¹¹⁶The Menninger Psychiatric Clinic (located in Topeka, Kansas, USA) was founded in 1920 by Charles Menninger (1862-1953) and his two sons Karl Augustus Menninger (1893-1990) and William Claire Menninger (1899-1966), with the intent to humanize the treatment of the mentally ill beyond asylum care, became one of the largest psychiatric training programs in the world after the Second World War. William and especially Karl were authors whose work helped to interpret psychoanalytic concepts for the American public and were particularly helpful to Protestant clergy in the 1950's and 1960's. See William Menninger's *Psychiatry in a Troubled World* (1946) and *Psychiatrist for a Troubled World* (1967); and Karl Menninger's, *The Vital Balance* (1963) and his widely popular, *Whatever Became of Sin?* (1973).

¹¹⁷From the Wright interview with Loder, printed in "Ruinatio Unto Redemption," p. 78.

1939), in order to explore the way both thinkers understood the character of religious consciousness. The dissertation was entitled, "The Nature of Religious Consciousness in the Writings of Sigmund Freud and Søren Kierkegaard: A Theoretical Study in the Correlation of Religious and Psychiatric Concepts."¹¹⁸ The major ideas of the thesis were later re-worked and published as *Religious Pathology and Christian Faith* in 1966. Although Loder never refers to his convictional experience in either the dissertation or *Religious Pathology*, it stands in the shadow, implicit to the discussion, informing his explorations and conclusions. These two works demonstrate Loder's proficiency in and adaptation of the psychoanalytic tradition; his analysis of Freud's work, especially his work on the psychotherapeutic value of dreams and fantasies, is then brought to bear upon the way we apprehend the Christian experience. Of particular concern to us here is observing the way Loder engages Freudian theories and theologically critiques them even as he absorbs these same theories into his theology.

Before we proceed, let us define some key Freudian terms and ideas. Freud developed his theories treating neurotic behavior, from which he came to believe that neurosis was goal-oriented. Until the purpose of the neurotic is identified, the behavior would continue. The drive of the neurotic is hidden within the unconscious, an unobservable, theoretical entity that allow continuity between early childhood and adulthood. When the self experiences a trauma, usually too painful to be remembered and "held," then it is placed within the unconscious. By repressing what is felt as a threat to the self, the ego *defends* against the disorganization of the self.¹¹⁹ The threats to the self come from two domains of influence: The *id* and the *superego*. The *id* imposes certain instinctual and biological demands (such as pleasure and survival) while the *superego* impose the socially desired internalization of parental control. The ego becomes the center of activity which "observes" and "controls" the self and its reality against the potentially destructive forces of the *id* and the *superego*, even as it is observed and controlled by this external reality.¹²⁰ As a result, Freud said:

The ego is the actual seat of anxiety. Threatened by dangers . . . , it develops the flight-reflex by withdrawing its own cathexis from the menacing perception or the similarly regarded process in the *id*, and emitting it as anxiety What it is that ego fears from the external and libidinal danger cannot be specified; we know that

¹¹⁸His dissertation committee consisted of Hans Hofmann, David C. McClelland and Richard R. Niebuhr. The scholarly community at Harvard appeared to be a setting that was uniquely established for the exploration of experiential religion. Cf. Richard R. Niebuhr's, *Experiential Religion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

¹¹⁹Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense* (Madison, CT: International Universities Press, 1966), pp. 5. See also Sigmund Freud's, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921) and *The Ego and the Id* (1927). For a helpful summary see "Sigmund Freud," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. III (New York: Macmillan, 1967).

¹²⁰*RPCF*, p. 57.

the fear is of being overwhelmed or annihilated, but it cannot be grasped analytically.¹²¹

Neurosis, therefore, is a crisis of volition or the inability to choose freely for a reality that is not determined by these potential threats.¹²²

The theme of relationality stands at the center of Loder's interest in the correlation between a theological understanding of religious consciousness and the way the psychoanalytic tradition has approached the consciousness of the person who claims to be religious. Loder's goal "is to work toward a sounder integration between theoretical points of view in the fields of religion and psychiatry."¹²³ He credits an observation by Hofmann as the impetus to his own work. "[In] the study of the interplay between religion and mental health . . . new inquiries must be as diligent as possible. Half-truths, undue generalizations and pre-mature syntheses have already confused the picture all too much. They lead only to further hiding from real issues."¹²⁴ By integration of the fields of religion and psychiatry Loder does not mean synthesis. He is not trying to create a new field by reducing one field of theory into another, or absorbing theoretical frameworks, posing the threat of reductionism. Suggestive of the personalist tradition, Loder sees the connection between two distinct fields as occurring in between them, when the two fields remain intact and are engaged or encountered in a dialectic that maintains the integrity of each. Throughout the thesis Loder develops a methodology that paves the way for later interdisciplinary work, producing a bi-polar structure that maintains the "consistent distinctions" of disparate fields which yields the mutual edification of each. He is not simply interested in comparisons or correlations, but seeking a methodology with the following conditions: "Avoidance of the reductionist approach; maintenance of the integrity of concepts as they are employed in both disciplines; establishment of a continuity of meaning across the boundaries of the respective disciplines; [and a] mutual deepening of insight in

¹²¹Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*. Translated by James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1961) cited in *RPCF*, p. 65. Freud identified three forms of anxiety: reality anxiety, instinctual anxiety, and moral anxiety. Each one is produced by a crisis of choice, the inability of the ego make decisions with freedom.

¹²²"Analysis does not set out to make pathological reactions impossible, but to give the patient's ego freedom to decide one way or the other." Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, cited in *RPCF*, pp. 58-59.

¹²³*NRC*, p. 1. "This thesis assumes on the one hand that in the last half-century psychiatric theory has achieved such pre-eminence that every serious theoretical study of human nature must take its insights into account. On the other hand, any sophisticated and profound system of human psychology has much to learn from an examination of religious self-understanding."

¹²⁴*NRC*, p. 1.

both disciplines as a result of the new continuities of meaning."¹²⁵ Even though attempts have been made to bridge these fields, very often perspectives that claim to value the integrity of religious experience actually reduce religious experience simply to one of many experiences intrinsic to human experience.¹²⁶ This is particularly true when it comes to a psychological interpretations of religious experiences. While psychiatry sees as its goal as "the objectification of subjective knowledge," understanding "private" religious experiences through a universal formula applicable to every individual is problematic.¹²⁷ "Thus a scientific psychiatric understanding of religion incites the distrust of a believer because his religious self-understanding is thereby relegated to a level of thought which for him is totally inappropriate."¹²⁸ In the only review of *RPCF*, one commentator questioned this methodology, whether clinical observations could ever be used to evaluate "religious facts."¹²⁹ But this is a misreading of Loder's intent.

Loder identifies a specific area of common concern to both Kierkegaard and Freud in the question of religious pathology. Pathology ensues from the failure to experience what Loder calls the "criterion consciousness," a consciousness that both Kierkegaard and Freud understood as the sign of "health," namely a state of "limited freedom," specifically the freedom to choose to be one's self. It is found to be "descriptive of consciousness in the states of 'blessedness' (Kierkegaard) and descriptive of consciousness in the 'goal of psychoanalysis' (Freud)." Which means for both Freud and Kierkegaard, pathological religion is found in a consciousness "in which [one's] freedom is not

¹²⁵It is a problem of "maintaining a consistent distinction between the levels of understanding within each discipline as it bears upon the material to be studied," of finding "levels of understanding in the respective fields which can be correlated without introducing ambiguities in conceptualization or terminology on either side." *NRC*, pp. 6, 2.

¹²⁶Loder sees reductionism at work in theorists who claim to value the authority of religious experience, but really do not. Cf. Erich Fromm, *Man for Himself* (1947), and *Psychoanalysis and Religion* (1950), Otto Rank, *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero* (1952) and Theodore Reik, *Mystery on the Mountain* (1959) for approaches to religion within a Freudian or neo-Freudian understanding of human nature. Loder also puts Carl Jung's work in this category, "Though he is careful to qualify his religious viewpoints, acknowledging that psychic reality may not be able fully to exhaust religious reality," Loder claims, "he nevertheless undertakes to construct an archetypal system which so completely accounts for the origins of religious experience that religious realities are left with almost nothing to explain and very little intrinsic worth (*NRC*, p. 8 note)." Cf. Jung's, *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, [1959] 1979), *Psychology and Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938) and *Answer to Job*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, [1958] 1973).

¹²⁷*NRC*, p. 12.

¹²⁸*NRC*, p. 13.

¹²⁹Jean-Pierre Deconchy, *Archives de Sociologie des Religions*, 13 (1968): 211-212. Deconchy refers to *RRPCF* as a "brilliant and striking book."

able to be realized." When viewed from the perspective of the criterional consciousness, both Kierkegaard and Freud "agree that a great portion of religious consciousness is in fact pathological."¹³⁰ It is pathological, even toxic, because it hinders the ability to embrace reality in all its brutality and beauty. Religious experiences were deemed neurotic by Freud because they lead to "an avoidance of external reality" and serve as "substitute for reality."¹³¹ The Christian faith is a "neurotic formation" because it "both avoids reality and substitutes a phantasy in its place."¹³² In his estimation, it is the church that most profoundly contributes to this "neurotic formation" because it hinders freedom.

In *The Future of an Illusion*, Freud categorically considered all religion as neurotic.¹³³ Drawing upon the anthropological and evolutionary theory of his time, combined with his understanding of neurosis, Freud surmised that "religion could offer no phenomenon, express no idea, advocate no point of view, without being placed in the framework of [his] views of the origins and manifestations of neurosis."¹³⁴ Freud put forth his theories on the neurotic origins of religious experience in two essays, "Obsessive Acts and Religious Practices" and "Leonardo Da Vinci and Memory of His Childhood," as well as *Totem and Taboo*, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, *The Future of an Illusion*, and *Moses and Monotheism*.¹³⁵

In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud affords his analysis of the Christian religion as a neurotic alleviation of guilt. Freud saw a sense of guilt as deriving from an overbearing super-ego working out its Oedipal drives. The super ego was given the personal form of the Father God. Demands placed upon a believer by the Father God "affected them in a way in which the super-ego affect the

¹³⁰NRC, p. 29.

¹³¹NRC, p. 386.

¹³²NRC, p. 402.

¹³³Freud, *Future of an Illusion*: "Religion would thus be the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity; like the obsessional neurosis of children, it rose out of the Oedipus complex, out of the relation to the father. If this view is right, it is to be supposed that a turning-away from religion is bound to occur with the fatal inevitability of a process of growth . . . (p. 43)" "Thus we call a belief an illusion when a wish-fulfillment is a prominent factor in its motivation, and in doing so we disregard its relations to reality, just as the illusion itself sets no store by verification (p. 31)." Freud understood his work as a fierce critique of Christianity. See Adam Phillips, *On Kissing, Tickling and Being Bored: Psychoanalytic Essays on the Unexamined Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 117-118. On Freud's contributions to a more critical appreciation of religion see Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Use of Faith After Freud* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

¹³⁴NRC, p. 399.

¹³⁵On Freud and his relation with his Jewish roots see David Bakan, *Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition* (London: Free Association Books, 1990).

obsessional neurotic."¹³⁶ The believer lives before an Evaluative image, namely a projected image of God. Religious experience finds its origin in an overbearing super-ego making demands impossible to realize, thus always living with the fear and guilt that comes with not pleasing God. Freud sees in Paul of Tarsus, for example, as one weighed down by neurotic guilt, which can be traced back to its primeval source, which he termed "original sin." It was a crime against God that could only be expiated through death. Freud writes:

In reality this crime, deserving of death, could have been the murder of the Father who later was deified. The murderous deed itself, however, was not remembered, in its place stood the phantasy of expiation and that is why this phantasy could be welcomed in the form of a gospel of salvation (evangel). A Son of God, innocent himself, had sacrificed himself, and had thereby taken over the guilt of the world. It had to be a Son, for the sin had been murder of the Father.¹³⁷

One is "made a Christian," writes Loder, "as a result of his inherited primal history which is reactivated in his unconscious phantasy life, expressed in his own Oedipal situation, and projected through appropriate images by the forces of the primary process into a religious interpretation of his conscious experience."¹³⁸ Thus, Freud writes, "The Mosaic religion had been a Father religion; Christianity became a Son religion. The Old God, the Father, took second place; Christ, the son, stood in His stead, just as in those dark times every son had longed to do."¹³⁹

The neurotic religious experience is reinforced by the religious communities. The demands of the Father God are strengthened by "group religious behavior," thus "corporate support tends to entrench the neurotic pattern of religious behavior by giving it a socially acceptable status." The believer's neurosis can thus be sanctioned by society, like the church, hindering one's ability to be "educated to reality."¹⁴⁰

Although both Freud and Kierkegaard identified pathology (in varying degrees) in all religious experiences, Kierkegaard nevertheless saw the tension caused by pathological expressions as a means towards which the criterion can be reached.¹⁴¹ Loder sees a correlation between Kierkegaard's understanding of psychological illness and Freud's understanding of religious

¹³⁶NRC, p. 393.

¹³⁷NRC, pp. 395-400. Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, trans. Katherine Jones (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), pp. 109-110.

¹³⁸NRC, p. 401.

¹³⁹Freud, p. 111.

¹⁴⁰NRC, p. 394.

¹⁴¹NRC, pp. 4-5.

pathology in "a clear-cut functional analogy between Kierkegaard's understanding of dread and despair and Freud's understanding of neurosis."¹⁴²

Kierkegaard understood dread and despair as distortions of consciousness. "Dread" is the English translation of the German *Angst*, the same word that Freud defined as "anxiety." Dread or anxiety, says Kierkegaard, is "the characteristic ambiguity of psychology." This "anxiety is really the *discrimen* (ambiguity) of subjectivity." It is a "sweet feeling of apprehension" that extends, deepens, and darkens in the development of personality.¹⁴³ Dread or anxiety is experienced in periods of tension, either momentary or prolonged, "between the image of the spirit and the denial of the spirit." By "spirit" Kierkegaard means personality or the self.¹⁴⁴ "In itself," Loder writes, "dread does not represent a disorganization of the personality or a disassembling of the elements of freedom. Rather, it is the state of ambiguity that precedes, and perhaps hastens, but does not persist in disorganization of the spirit and the downfall of freedom. It is, in essence, indicative that the spirit cannot be itself."¹⁴⁵ Thus, "all dread is deficient freedom." And yet one cannot be free until one realizes one's own state of guilt. "Guilt has an ultimacy in that it vividly exposes the mayhem of radical freedom and eliminates escapism," because awareness of guilt is known through one's relationship with God. The spirit cannot be itself until it comes to see itself relationally. Until that point one remains in despair.

There are two kinds of despair and one form that is not appropriately called "despair." The last form Kierkegaard describes is the despair as "not being conscious of having a self." This is the life of the Aesthetic individual, living "without being thoroughly conscious that they are spiritual beings."¹⁴⁶ And the possibility of freedom is remote because one cannot be free separated from one's self. Thus, Kierkegaard believes despair is "not willing to be oneself." It is a willful denial and refusal to be a self or desiring to be other than oneself. The self is alienated from itself. The strongest form of despair is when the self is openly defiant in its determination to be a self unto itself. "The self," writes Kierkegaard, "wants to enjoy the entire satisfaction of making itself into itself, of

¹⁴²NRC, p. 418.

¹⁴³Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin*, Edited and Translated with an Introduction and Notes by Reidar Thomte (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 14ff, 197; and *The Sickness Unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening*, Edited and Translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983); NRC, pp. 419ff. RPCF, pp. 37ff.

¹⁴⁴*The Sickness Unto Death*, p. 13.

¹⁴⁵RPCF, p. 39.

¹⁴⁶*Sickness Unto Death*, p. 23.

developing itself, of being itself; it wants to have the honor of this poetical, this masterly plan according to which it has understood itself. And yet in the last resort it is a riddle how it understands itself; just when it seems to be nearest to having the fabric finished it can arbitrarily resolve the whole thing into nothing." This is the despair of weakness.¹⁴⁷

Consequently, all forms of despair find their origins in the disrelation of the self.¹⁴⁸ The self cannot be itself through persistence, determination, and stifling self-reflection. This, too, leads to despair. When the self cannot find a power at its foundation to define itself and maintain a sense of identity over time, the self continually re-imagines itself infinitely, "devastating old self images and arbitrarily conjuring up new ones."¹⁴⁹ These images perceived through infinite self-reflection as products of the self ungrounded produces further despairs, steals the possibility of freedom, and results in living in a false reality, a state of denial not unlike Freud's description of the neurotic. Both Kierkegaard and Freud point to a dynamic within the self, a "compulsion to self-destruction" driven by an ego that is bent on strategies of avoidance - avoiding itself (including a consciousness of one's self-destructive capacities), the nature of the world and one's relationship to it, and for Kierkegaard, avoiding the experience of God in Jesus Christ who alone has the power to relationally ground the self.¹⁵⁰ According to Freud, all religious experiences are manifestations of the "sickness unto death," even as for Kierkegaard are most forms of existence, including some religious expressions.¹⁵¹ For Freud, a pathological consciousness hinders one's ability to live criterionally. For Kierkegaard, criterional consciousness could be achieved by deepening the severity of the pathology, by entering and suffering through the despair, encountering one's alienation within the disrelation even as the self is redefined through the relationship with the God-man, Jesus Christ. So that by entering into the delusion, by heightening the inherent tension or conflict within the self, one can actually move closer to freedom. That is, providing the One in whose presence the tension is experienced is the One who is the embodiment of freedom, namely the God-man.

For Kierkegaard, "the resolution of pathological religiousness. . . centers around the imposition of the image of the God-man." This is a "delusion of the infinite," but only through the delusion can one aspire to encounter the God-Man. There are many interpretations of the God-man

¹⁴⁷*Sickness Unto Death*, pp. 49-67.

¹⁴⁸Despair is "a disrelation in a relation which relates itself to its own self and is constituted by another, so that the dis-relationship in that self-relationship reflect itself infinitely in the relation to the Power which constituted it." *Sickness Unto Death*, pp. 13ff.

¹⁴⁹*NRC*, p. 417.

¹⁵⁰*NRC*, p. 426.

¹⁵¹*NRC*, pp. 427-428.

theme in Kierkegaard, but "none of them," Loder suggests, "brings the God-man into line with Kierkegaard's central concern, which was to understand the 'how' of the proclamation, and with his basic epistemological points of view."¹⁵² Kierkegaard wrote:

...my thesis is not that what is . . . proclaimed in official Christianity ought not to be regarded as Christian. No, my thesis is that proclamation in itself is not Christianity. What I am concerned about is the "how," that personal enforcement of the proclamation: Without that Christianity is not Christianity.¹⁵³

Only through an encounter *with* - not an understanding *of* - the God-man, the Absolute Paradox, can one move through the pathology and personally know the "how" of the Christian experience. Given in a "Moment," the God-man is bestowed. "He ceases to be what the understanding took Him to be; He ceases to be merely an obsessive thought and becomes significant for the individual himself."¹⁵⁴ Kierkegaard explains the encounter in this way:

There is something which makes it impossible for one to desist from looking - and lo! while one looks, one sees as in a mirror, one gets to see oneself, or He, the sign of contradiction, sees into the depths of one's heart while one is gazing into the contradiction. A contradiction placed directly in front of a man - if only one can get him to look upon it - is a mirror; while he is judging, what dwells within him must be revealed.¹⁵⁵

The encounter with the Paradox heightens the tension of the self and exposes the disrelation within itself and its own alienation from the Paradox. The Moment is a time of contradiction in which one "sees" the Paradox and through the reflection of one's self in relation to the Paradox, one's whole being is called into question even as it is liberated.

What is bestowed in the moment is a self free from guilt and free to be authentically oneself in and through the relationship with the Paradox. There is joy and there is relief from the despair of the misrelation within itself. "The individual emerges from the Moment," Loder explains, "in the conviction that the God-man is a sign of contradiction, but a sign which has very special meaning for

¹⁵²NRC, p. 433.

¹⁵³NRC, p. 18. The quotation comes from Kierkegaard's *Papirer*, x.2, translated in Hermann Diem, *Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Existence*, trans. H. Knight (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1959), p. 145.

¹⁵⁴NRC, p. 435. For reference to "the Moment" see Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments/ Johannes Climacus*, Edited and Translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 14-15, 20-22, 51-52.

¹⁵⁵NRC, p. 436. *Philosophical Fragments*.

him. . . . The result of this bestowal of the image of the God-man is freedom; the Knight of Faith is free by virtue of the Paradox."¹⁵⁶

Of primary concern to Loder is understanding the change that takes place in the religious personality, when "one's consciousness is transformed from a pathological state into a criterional one."¹⁵⁷ Drawing upon Herbert Silberer's (1882-1922) work on the power of images to integrate and reorder reality through what he called hypnagogic phenomena, Loder shows that there is a "hypnagogic paradigm" at work in individuals who have experienced transformation.¹⁵⁸ Silberer's work established how an *image* has the ability to reorder reality, most notably during dream states or in the somnolent state just prior to sleep. He identified an independent psychic process whereby the contents of consciousness can be symbolically modified during sleep. Relying upon Silberer's phenomenology, Loder speaks of "the power of an image to integrate forces and create a primary locus of reality." One's consciousness of reality or "reality consciousness" is contingent upon one's relationship to an image, the "artificer of consciousness." Silberer has taken such a moment and described a sequence, as if in "slow motion," a general pattern of the paradigm moving through a five-step sequence: "endopsychic conflict; a moment of belief in an 'image;' resolution of the conflict; bestowal of the criterional state of consciousness; anagogic analysis of the image present."¹⁵⁹ According to Loder, this sequence describes Kierkegaard's account of his conversion by the God-man, as well as the "reconstructive and converting phantasies" that Freud explored in his writings.¹⁶⁰ Freud also drew upon Silberer's research and knew the power of the hypnagogic

¹⁵⁶NRC, p. 440. The knight of faith reference is from Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*. "For consciousness to attain a belief in the God-man, which is based upon an imaginary representation and which at the same time effects the 'condition' of the individual, the God-man must be a composite image combining conflictual elements in a resolution of intellectual conflict and simultaneously releasing the tension of the conflict between modes.(p. 441)"

¹⁵⁷NRC, pp. 30-31

¹⁵⁸Herbert Silberer was a Viennese psychoanalyst who had a profound impact upon Freud. The hypnagogic paradigm is explored in "Report Regarding a Method That Allows Provoking and Observing Certain Manifestations of Symbolical Hallucinations," (1909) and *Der Traum: Einführung in die Traumpsycholegie* (Stuttgart: Verlag von Ferdinand Enke, 1919). In *The Problems of Mysticism and Its Symbolism* (New York: Moffat, Yard and Company, 1917), Silberer sought to make a correspondence between psychoanalysis and alchemy, a work that shaped Jung's interest in alchemy and the dynamics of psychic change.

¹⁵⁹NRC, p. 5; *RPCF*, pp. 178ff. As we will see, Loder's use of this sequence foreshadows his theory of "convictional knowing," which he begins to explore more fully after 1970 and emerges with the publication of *The Transforming Moment*. We will analyze this sequence more fully in the next chapter.

¹⁶⁰NRC, p. 5.

paradigm (operating through visions, dreams, phantasies) as "capable of transforming consciousness and restoring it to a criterional status."¹⁶¹

Loder uses Freud's analysis of "Little Hans," as a case in point.¹⁶² In this well-known study, a young neurotic boy was able to formulate fantasies to free him from his neurosis. However, Freud never viewed these psychic experiences as being specifically religious. The paradigms had the potential to yield freedom for the neurotic sufferer. Both Kierkegaard's encounter with the image of the God-man and the fantasies of Little Hans have a striking similarity in their ability to produce freedom. Freud's presumptions about religion hindered him from realizing the correlation. Yet the power of the paradigm to reorient reality and pave the way for sanity and health, producing a consciousness that could be described as a "new birth" is explicitly religious and exactly the kind of experience one encounters in the Christian life, namely transformation.¹⁶³ In *The Future of an Illusion*, we see Freud's objective to provide an "education to reality" as an alternative to the ill-effects of religious training - ill, because religious education leads to a distortion of reality. C. Daniel Batson correctly see Loder's objective is to correct this by, "attempting to explore creative religious thought which is also 'education to reality' in a more profound but no less pragmatic sense than Freud's realist assumption can recognize."¹⁶⁴

In Loder's estimation, correlations can be made between theology and psychiatry and those connections can be made in the most unlikely places. He, thus, draws these important conclusions:

In line with Kierkegaard's interests in discovering the "how" of the proclamation, it is very probable that Freud, in calling attention to the transforming power of the phantasy according to the hypnagogic paradigm, has made a significant contribution to Kierkegaard's desire to know "how" the proclamation is appropriated. The importance of this particular contribution for Kierkegaard is that it names and describes the particular psychic process which is involved in making the image of the God-man the object of faith. That is, Freud's insights here extend Kierkegaard's own understanding of the "how" of the proclamation, and they do so in a fashion which is completely in accordance with the criterion of human freedom upon which Freud and Kierkegaard both agree. Thus, on this point Freud is able to make a non-reductionist contribution to the Kierkegaardian understanding of Christianity at the very crucial point of the transformation of consciousness into "freedom."

On the other hand, Kierkegaard, by his very astute analysis of the phenomena of consciousness as it is altered by the image of the God-man, has described the

¹⁶¹NRC, p. 444; *RPCF*, p. 178ff. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud relies heavily upon Silberer's work. See especially, "Regard for Representability," Chapter 6 (Part 2).

¹⁶²Cf. Freud's "Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy" (1909).

¹⁶³NRC, p. 34.

¹⁶⁴C. Daniel Batson, "Creativity and Religious Development: Toward a Structural/Functional Psychology of Religion," Th.D. dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, 1971, p. 85.

especially religious significance of the composite image which conforms to the hypnagogic paradigm. Thus Kierkegaard has indicated that one of the most religiously significant insights of Freud has nothing explicitly to do with religion in Freud's own writings. This insight is his understanding of how criterional consciousness may be restored by phantasy – or perhaps even delusion or hallucination. This transformation process is “religious” on two accounts: (a) by virtue of how it may be used to convey to the individual the significance of the God-man, and (b) by virtue of its outcome which is to restore a criterional consciousness which may be given a distinctively religious interpretation, as in the writings of Kierkegaard.¹⁶⁵

Loder thus brings his interest in “how” one becomes a Christian into dialogue with Freud's psychoanalytic theories that account for change in such a way that does not reduce Christian experience to simply a work of the psyche under duress and strain.

The “how” is most important and at the center of the “how” is his firm belief, grounded in Loder's own convictional experience, that, “When Christianity becomes a lived fact, it becomes a matter of psychic change and interpersonal engagement involving both language and thought.”¹⁶⁶ Part of the “how” is discerning the way human participation (as opposed to divine) participates in religious experience. Krister Stendahl sees the significance of Loder's thesis in the way it “contributes to the fuller understanding of the extent of human participation in religious experience.”¹⁶⁷ In the tradition of the personalists making a space to preserve the value of the self, of keeping human life *human*, Loder's passion rests in his desire to grasp how human transformation occurs and the need to convey this to the wider Christian community. “If it were not for this power to change human life,” Loder asks, “surely the Christian faith and all its theological bastions would be little more than a shared fantasy which is compulsively rationalized century after century.”¹⁶⁸ His dissertation marks the beginning of a life-long desire “to penetrate more deeply into the nature of human change in the Christian experience.”¹⁶⁹ The insights he offers into the nature of human

¹⁶⁵NRC, pp. 446-447.

¹⁶⁶RPCF, p. 21. Anticipating the Pelagian charge, Loder writes, “As long as there is no necessary causal connection between what is done on a human level to reveal man to himself (at any stage in his development) and the action of Divine Grace, Pelagianism is not a problem. (p. 21)”

¹⁶⁷Krister Stendahl, “Summaries of Doctoral Dissertations,” *Harvard Theological Review*, 57 (1963): 89.

¹⁶⁸RPCF, p. 20. “It would not even be a ‘healthy’ utopianism, since it would not fall on the near side of the horizon of ‘normalcy.’ As an illustration of the importance of structural change, note that it was precisely because of Freud's success in changing the structure of psychic functioning through psychoanalytic techniques that he could denounce other methods which claimed the same ability and, in particular, deride the Christian church for perpetuating a ‘mass neurosis’. (p. 20)”

¹⁶⁹RPCF, p. 24.

change are tremendously significant in shaping the way we theologically reflect upon the Christian life, as well as the way we approach the entire discipline of theology. Thus we conclude this section with Loder's powerfully discerning statement that summarizes where we have been and establishes a horizon toward which we must now move:

If the concrete claim that Christianity makes for human society is the ability to change human life, it is not the integrity of theology that needs further elaboration, but rather it is the integrity of human change that needs closer scrutiny and more penetrating insight. It cannot merely be said that the kind of change which is uniquely Christian is that which enables one to assert and maintain the tenets of Christian theology. This would be to say that the integrity of Christian change lies in the verbal assertions that were made after the change took place, which is to place the entire burden for defining the integrity of the change upon the integrity of theology. But theology cannot bear this burden because the integrity of theology itself is *sui generis*, and as such it has no autonomy different from any other elaborate rationalization of a belief or shared opinion that is held and defended a priori. It must, rather, be maintained that theological assertions are expressive of psychological events just as definitely - though in a different way - as they are descriptive of the nature of the Godhead and supernatural events. One is able to make theological affirmations because of changes that have been wrought in the structure of his personality. Affirmations of any sort - theological included - are expressions primarily of the personality; only secondarily do they express the supernatural truth which in theological circles sets everyone's curiosity at rest.¹⁷⁰

III. Return to Princeton: Conflict and Transformation

After graduating from Harvard University, Loder was called to Princeton Theological Seminary in 1962 to teach the core courses in Christian education - psychology, philosophy of education, and socio-cultural foundations of education. When Loder told Hofmann that he was going into the field of Christian education, he replied, "Well, you can do something for that field."¹⁷¹ Teaching Christian education had a tremendous appeal because it allowed Loder to teach almost "anything and everything in the seminary." "It takes in the whole thing," he said, because "education requires you to come from all these different perspectives - theological, philosophical, psychological, social, cultural." Christian education was "a wonderful place to be having been trained in interdisciplinary studies." When he arrived, not much had changed in the philosophy of Christian education from when he first entered Princeton. It was still very "sloppy" as he put it, "They dealt with analogies or some kind of vague similarities, and that really bothered me intellectually."¹⁷² A philosophy of Christian education had to be firmly grounded in the wider context of practical theology and practical theology must be very clear about what he later called "the generative core

¹⁷⁰RPCF, pp. 20-21.

¹⁷¹Wright transcription, April 2001.

¹⁷²Wright transcription, April 2001.

issue of the discipline.”¹⁷³ For almost forty years, Loder unfolded a practical theology, as Wright describes and I would concur, “of extraordinary interdisciplinary breadth and convictional depth.”¹⁷⁴

By “the whole thing,” Loder meant comprehending the totality of human experience encountering and responding to the totality of the Gospel. This is the generative core discipline of practical theology. Issues relating to “pastoral practices, educational programs, organizational dynamics or how to conduct the spiritual life of congregations,” are often identified as basic areas of concern, but not for Loder. These issues can only be addressed:

...out of the core problematic that underlies them and indicates in ultimate terms why these proximate issues persistently reappear with perennial regularity. *The core problematic is that such issues require that two ontologically distinct realities, the divine and the human, be brought together in a unified form of action that preserves the integrity of both and yet gives rise to coherent behavior.* This paradoxical problematic implies that God’s action and human action, although ontologically distinct, are not ultimately dichotomous. Moreover, it implies that anyone formulating such a coherence for practical theology must at the same time find that coherence to be profoundly self-involving.¹⁷⁵

Although this summary of the problematic was written towards the end of his professional career, his methodology is analogous to that used in his doctoral dissertation. Loder’s project is an extension and a deepening of the problematic that Brunner faced with Barth.¹⁷⁶ God’s actions and humanity’s actions must remain ontologically distinct. Yet, that there is a connection must be affirmed. The task at hand is finding the methodological framework or conceptualization that is able to apprehend

¹⁷³Loder, “The Place of Science in Practical Theology: The Human Factor,” p. 22. See also his entry, “Praktisch-theologisch,” in *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft*. Hans Dieter Betz, Don S. Browning, Bernd Janowski, Eberhard Jüngel, editors. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), pp. 498-499.

¹⁷⁴Wright, “Ruination Unto Redemption,” p. 79.

¹⁷⁵Loder, p. 22-23. Italics in the text. See also Loder, “Normativity and Context in Practical Theology: ‘The Interdisciplinary Issue,’” Friedrich Schweitzer and Johannes A. Van der Ven, editors, *Practical Theology: International Perspectives*. New York: Peter Lang, 1999, pp. 359ff.

¹⁷⁶In modern theology the problematic goes back to Schleiermacher’s *Glaubenslehre*, second edition, trans. H. R. Mackintosh (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976). Schleiermacher was the first to develop a “theology of the subject,” a practical theology, in contrast to dogmatics, and helped establish a Protestant chair in the field at the University of Berlin in 1821. The first practical theologian was C. I. Nitzsch (1787-1868), a student of Schleiermacher, defined practical theology as “the theory of the church’s practice of Christianity.” See Ray S. Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), pp. 24ff. Schleiermacher’s proposals were never implemented. Practical theology became increasingly a functional discipline for training persons in the techniques required for the pastoral office. James W. Fowler, “Practical Theology and Theological Education: Some Models and Questions,” *Theology Today*, 42 (1985): 43-45.

(not fully comprehend) the relation between the two. Thus, it can be said that practical theology is primarily a theology of action.

How does one account for the change that occurs in the Christian experience? The dynamics of transformation as identified in Freud and Kierkegaard are brought into sharp relief with the prevailing sociological theories of human action. One of the most comprehensive attempts to apprehend human agency was put forth by the American sociologist, Talcott Parsons (1902-1979), whose writings continue to have a commanding hold over social theorists. Beginning at Harvard and continuing throughout his years at Princeton, Loder developed what he called a "neo-Parsonian action theory," based on a dialectical relation of transformation and socialization. This theory, informed by Kierkegaard, acted as a kind of *continuo* throughout Loder's *oeuvre*, a kind of foundational principle that eventually culminates, as we shall see, in his understanding of the *analogia spiritus* that stands at the heart of practical theology and the Christian life.¹⁷⁷ We will explore the more mature expression of this theory of the *analogia spiritus* in the next chapter, but the groundwork for that discussion needs to be offered here.

Talcott Parsons was a child of the manse who was both fascinated and troubled by the dominance religion can have over one's life. His father, Edward Smith Parsons (1863-1943) was an "active predestinarian," a Congregationalist minister with a social-gospel orientation who understood the Christian faith as having a lead role in the improvement of society. Yet, he believed that the church as a human institution was "shackled by the inherent conservatism of human nature," and an obstructive force in the path of human progress. He hoped for a day when the church would be "the inspirer of all life," rather than "the controller of life."¹⁷⁸ Talcott was born in a later phase of his father's intellectual life in which he moved from, using a Niebuhrian model, a Christ the Transformer of Culture approach to a Christ of Culture, a move that was contra-sectarian and individualistic to a more secular, cultural expression of the Christian faith.¹⁷⁹ To be a Christian means to be a follower of Jesus' teachings, living out principles that can be taught and applied at the personal, familial, and national levels.¹⁸⁰ Taking a more accommodative approach, the church and its teachings exist to serve society.

¹⁷⁷Wright, "Ruination Unto Redemption," p. 78.

¹⁷⁸From Edward S. Parsons, "A Christian Critique of Socialism," *Andover Review*, XI (1889) quoted in Bruce C. Werner, *The Theory and Scholarship of Talcott Parsons to 1951: A Critical Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 12ff.

¹⁷⁹H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1951).

¹⁸⁰Cf. Edward Smith Parsons, *The Social Message of Jesus* (1912) cited in Werner, pp. 16ff.

It is from this religious framework that Talcott began to explore the way human societies are ordered and maintained. Parsons read the institutional economist Walton Hamilton, studied with the social anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) at the London School of Economics. At the University of Heidelberg, he came under the influence of Max Weber (1864-1920), whom he viewed primarily as a social theorist (as seen in Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*) and he weighed the economic theories of Alfred Marshall (1842-1924) and Vilfredo Pareto (1846-1923). All of these influences converged in the publication of *The Structure of Social Action* (1937), that put forth a theory of socioeconomic order which sought to explain how capitalism and free enterprise functioned in the modern world. The organizing structures endemic to his socioeconomic theory, he believed, could be transposed to all systems that seek to control, regulate and maintain action, an extension that eventually led to the publication of *Toward a General Theory of Action* (1951). Both of these volumes shaped sociological theorizing for decades.¹⁸¹ Indeed, John Milbank detects most contemporary leaders in the field of the sociology of religion, for example Clifford Geertz, Peter Berger, Thomas Luckmann, Robert Bellah, and Niklas Luhmann are fundamentally followers of Parsons, even when that connection is denied.¹⁸²

A follower of Parsons sees the wisdom of understanding all systems through the filter of his "structural-functional theory." He identified structural components inherent to various organizing systems of society. All living systems - from the micro to the macro, from the biological to cultural systems - organize themselves in order maintain intrinsic levels of functioning and to meet adaptational needs provided by the larger organizing structure. In all system actors move toward the realization of specifics and that movement is reinforced through feedback given by the wider organizing system seeking to integrate the actor into its scheme. Assimilation, accommodation, habit, adaption are patterns of socialization. Similar to Freud's understanding of the Id as being pure energy which needs to be control by the ego, Super Ego and conscience, Parsons and other social theorists like him maintain, as Milbank puts it, a "management of force." The primary goal of socialization is stabilization.

When applied to the way religious ideas and communities function, religion is understood as "components of the protected human sphere." Religion and religious systems are human constructs

¹⁸¹*Toward a General Theory of Action* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951); *Social Systems and the Evolution of Action Theory* (New York: Free Press, 1977).

¹⁸²John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p. 106. Forty years before Milbank, Loder was writing about the dangers of socialization and offering a critique of social theories with regard to theological reflection. Loder's critique was basically ignored and went unheeded. For example, an utilitarian approach to religion can be seen in the titles of Luhmann's works, *Funktion der Religion* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977) and *Religiöse Dogmatik und gesellschaftliche Funktion* (New York: E. Mellen Press, 1984). See also Karl Wilhelm Dahm, *Religion System und Sozialisation* (Luchterhand, 1972).

that are useful to society as a whole because of the way they reinforce social norms, "legitimizing and sacralizing common conventions."¹⁸³ For example, in *Human Society*, Kingsley Davis quite explicitly defines the value of religion in functional terms:

Religion, then, does four things that help to maintain the dominance of sentiment over organic desire, or group ends over private interest. First it offers, though its system of supernatural belief, an explanation of primary group ends and a justification of their primacy. Second it provides, through its collective ritual, a means for the constant renewal of common sentiments. Third it furnishes, through its sacred objects, a concrete reference for the values and a rallying point for all persons who share the same values. Fourth it provides an unlimited and in superable source of rewards for good conduct, punishments for bad. In these ways religion makes a unique and indispensable contribution to social integration.¹⁸⁴

This statement is a perfect example of the kind of reductionistic approach common in psychological and sociological circles, the kind of response that Loder wants to resist at all costs. Just about everything within the Parsonian action theory is understood and its value judged based upon its functionality.

Recently, Milbank has vehemently critiqued this approach when it comes to grasping and evaluating theological claims and church practice, proposing that a sociologist might say, "A function of the Eucharist is to bind together the disparate elements of the Christian community."¹⁸⁵ This is true – to an extent because it does not exhaust what occurs in the Eucharist. Further explicating Milbank's example, Loder writes, "...since this explains a phenomenon in terms of what it is and does, it not only verges on tautology, but it reduces an essentially theological reality to a universalizing abstraction doing violence to the intrinsic significance of the event."¹⁸⁶ Milbank would like to free all theological considerations from its often uncritical influence from and reliance upon sociocultural theories. Loder prefers to take a different approach. He respects the work of Parsons and acknowledges the invaluable insights into the dynamics of human nature provided by social science theorists. Given his interdisciplinary methodology, Loder brings his own understanding of the way transformations occur in human life (particularly of a religious nature) and brings them into a creative tension with Parsons' theories. "Theological reflection needs, then, to negate this negation [i. e. - reductionistic approaches negating or "doing violence" to the intrinsic value of religious events and experiences], and reappropriate functionalist insights so they can contribute to

¹⁸³Milbank, pp. 3ff, 108.

¹⁸⁴Kingsley David, *Human Society* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960), p. 529 quoted in James E. Loder, "Sociocultural Foundations for Christian Education," in Marvin J. Taylor, ed., *An Introduction to Christian Education* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), p. 79.

¹⁸⁵Milbank, p. 108.

¹⁸⁶Loder, "Normativity and Context in Practical Theology," p. 377, note 12.

the communion creating presence of Jesus Christ, whereby, the Eucharistic bond created is preeminently in the Eucharist, and only secondarily in the sociology of the situation. Theology retains an asymmetrical bipolar relation to relevant social science understandings as transformed for an interpretation of the Eucharist."¹⁸⁷

From Loder's viewpoint, the "overall aim of the [Parsonian] system is tension-reduction and pattern-maintenance." He continues:

Thus, for any intentional act the system as a whole impinging implicitly upon that act will work to incorporate what is done into the overall inertial system. As the system moves through time, it develops cracks and ruptures which have to be repaired. Problem-solving repairs but does not alter the fundamental forces at work to preserve the system or the inevitable decline and death of the system as a whole.¹⁸⁸

An overemphasis upon the drive of socialization ignores the fact that reality is so much larger than any systemic attempt to define it. At all levels of life, "cracks and ruptures," appear within the system. In order to preserve itself, the system uses its resources to repair and heal, even as it anticipates and fights off potential threats. Yet, all the problem-solving in the world, all the energy expended to hold the system together is not strong enough to prevent breakdowns within the system or more significantly from a theological perspective, cannot withstand an *inbreaking* from outside the system.

Loder's Neo-Parsonian model acknowledges the formative influence of socialization. But it is not the only influence. Socialization as a natural force cannot be denied; but socialization cannot serve as a substitute for what he sees as a "counterforce" to socialization, namely *transformation*. The process of socialization has to be recognized for what it is and what it is not. He emphasizes transformation not in sharp contrast with socialization, in order to demonstrate that socialization is not the only action theory. "Transformation takes places in all basic spheres of action," Loder argued, "and it exposes the evidence that a deeper intelligibility underlies the system, but it is not usually released except through a transformational process." Just as Parsons and others have described socialization occurring at all levels of reality - biology, personality, society, culture - so, too, Loder maintains, there are patterns of transformation at work.¹⁸⁹

When does transformation occur? "Whenever, within a given frame of reference or experience, hidden orders of coherence and meaning emerge to replace or alter the axioms of the

¹⁸⁷Loder, p. 377, note 12.

¹⁸⁸Loder, p. 379, Appendix I.

¹⁸⁹See Appendix 2 in "Variations on a Theme or Transformation in Multiple Contexts," Loder, p. 381

given frame and reorder its elements accordingly."¹⁹⁰ A sociocultural approach to reality might be helpful in articulating the "how" on other levels of action, but the same theories cannot completely account for the "how" of religious experience, particularly the Christian experience, that gives witness to the action of God through Jesus Christ.¹⁹¹ The reason why this needs to be stressed is because, and this is a key point, *transformation "within the field of human action prefigure and point toward the work and mission of the Holy Spirit which is to transform the field of human action as a whole."*¹⁹² A sociocultural understanding of religion hinders the theological community and the worshipping community from embracing the core, constitutive component of the Christian life, namely transformation.

Starting in the 1960's, the transformational paradigm was brought to bear upon a discipline that had been heavily and inordinately influenced by theories of socialization - Christian education. This preoccupied Loder's thinking for most of the decade. In "Conflict Resolution in Christian Education," and "Sociocultural Foundations for Christian Education," Loder provides an analysis and a critique of the prevailing methodologies and foundational approaches used in teaching the faith.¹⁹³ In these two pieces, we find Loder beginning to form a theory of education that both incorporates his reading of Kierkegaard and explores the implications of the transformational pattern. Loder wants to move our understanding of religion away from the sociocultural perspective, which has been studied primarily through institutions which are, as systems, generally understood as "tension-reducing, pattern-maintaining" communities.¹⁹⁴ He wants to get beyond Kingsley Davis' functional understanding of religion by raising the question: "to what extent is religion an imaginative creation of corporate man functioning to meet only the tension-reduction needs of the sociocultural systems at large and to what extent is it actually formative of the core value system of a

¹⁹⁰Loder, p. 380.

¹⁹¹"Conviction cannot finally be translated into public knowledge, and public knowledge, as such, cannot convict; or, as [Carol] Zaleski puts it, 'a revelation is binding only if it binds.'" See Loder's review of Zaleski's, *Otherworld Journeys: Accounts of Near-Death Experience in Medieval and Modern Times* (Oxford, 1987) in *Theology Today* 44 (1988): 528-529.

¹⁹²Loder, p. 380. Emphasis added. These quotations come from a piece written in the late 1990's, but the themes contained therein occupied Loder's thinking more than thirty years earlier. Here we have the fullest articulation of these ideas. We will explore the transformational pattern more fully in the next chapter.

¹⁹³Loder, "Conflict Resolution in Christian Faith," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, LVII (1964), pp. 19-36; and "Sociocultural Foundations for Christian Education," cf. footnote 171.

¹⁹⁴"Sociocultural Foundations for Christian Education," p. 79.

given social order?"¹⁹⁵ Given all that we have seen within Loder's writings, it is obvious that he does not want to limit the value of religion to its function. In fact, he suggests that the church "is not an effective socialization institution;" yet so often that is precisely how it chooses to operate, especially with regard to Christian education. The socializing goals of secular education cannot be applied to education in the church. When this occurs, as it has for the last fifty years or more in the American church, the results are disastrous. Loder writes:

... the church educates as if it were a closed society within the social system at large, when in fact it is not. Persons are brought up through the church's "school" and "promoted" into adult society where they "commune" on equal terms alongside adults. The series of actions concerned with communicant education amounts to a "rite of passage" which is empty because it usually does not, in any way that is significant to the young person, pass him from one status to another. The real rite of passage for the young person is his graduation from high school or college, his movement out of his family of origin, and his assumptions of adult social responsibility. The charade of education for upcoming communicants in the church is self-destructive because it does not move young persons out of the family of origin but rather into a different form of dependence upon the family, namely, upon the "family of God" and upon an institution which in turn is dependent upon family structures.¹⁹⁶

Loder is not suggesting that the "school" in the church be abandoned, but that the nature of Christian education be rethought in terms other than reinforcing patterns of socialization. In fact, this critique of socialization raises the question whether or not one can actually *teach* the Christian faith. "Surely . . . the Christian faith is not something that can be learned, nor can it be induced through the process of redirecting the drives of a natural man as takes place in psychoanalytic practice. Faith is received by grace, and grace not only is not man's to administer but it conforms man to that faith which is not of himself; it shapes him into the basic form of humanity, which is the man Jesus." Which means that perhaps "the only valid education, then, is enrichment of the faith that has already been delivered."¹⁹⁷ But how is Christian faith delivered?

Alternatively, an educational theory that incorporates a transformational paradigm pays close attention to the cracks, ruptures, and breaks in human knowing because they contain the means through which a deeper intelligibility can be discerned, and thereby are potentially more significant in the way they encourage new creative expressions in all forms of knowledge, leading to experiences of profound conviction. "Educationally, creativity is generally fostered by placing a

¹⁹⁵Loder, pp. 80-81.

¹⁹⁶Loder, pp. 82-81.

¹⁹⁷*RPCF*, p. 19.

positive value upon stress and conflict," Loder points out.¹⁹⁸ The continuous challenge of Christian education is "to bring the learner into confrontation with the existential dichotomies of human life for the sake of Christian conviction."¹⁹⁹ A person is most fully alive and authentically oneself when thrown into moments of heightened being and tension, when the dichotomies are most pronounced. That is the moment when education can be most fruitful and where the Christian faith can be "learned," or more correctly, *experienced*. This means that, in a way that reflects Hofmann (above), Loder believes "no community of believers should tolerate the assumption that 'pattern maintenance' is their *raison d'être*. The Christian solutions a man achieves for the crucial struggles of his personal life need to be repeatedly called into question."²⁰⁰ The church plays a crucial role of either cutting its people off from conflict or being comfortable with the level of existential confusion and doubt necessary for Christian faith and practice.

Conflict plays a pivotal role in Loder's theology. If socialization involves a strategy of conflict-avoidance, then transformation cracks open the system in moments of conflict. When the church views itself as a socializing entity, which avoids conflicts and prefers "pattern maintenance," then it runs the risk of not only devitalizing the church, but actually standing in the way of an individual's appropriation of the faith. Loder asserts that, "Periodically the procedures of Christian education tend to obscure the persons who are trying to grow up within the ranks of the Church. The error is that the very vitality of the human being which pushes him endlessly in search of new problems and novel solutions is scarcely ever considered as foundational to the Christian education enterprise."²⁰¹ Christian education is more than just passing on information *about* Jesus, that is providing factual knowledge about the Christian life which enables one to function as a Christian in a worshipping community. The believer does not want to accumulate knowledge, but appropriate it,

¹⁹⁸James E. Loder, "Creativity," in *A Dictionary of Religious Education*. John M. Sutcliff, editor (London: SCM Press, 1984), p.102. This is done "by affirming that the inner life of fantasy and feeling may be a source of truth, by working in a context where there is no absolute human authority, by emphasizing complexity rather than simplicity except when simplicity genuinely masters a wide range of complexity (E=MC²), and finally by recognizing and accepting personal differences. The unique value of creativity for Christian education lies in its inherent potential for reflecting in human terms the nature and purpose of the on-going creative work of Christ's Spirit. (p. 102)"

¹⁹⁹James E. Loder, "Existentialism," in *Harper's Encyclopedia of Religious Education*. Iris V. Cully & Kendig Brubaker Cully, general editors, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), p. 242. "He becomes the One who first convicts by driving superficial human dilemmas to their depths in alienation from God, and then at the point of uttermost alienation he redeems the individual with a grace that transforms all human distortions into expressions of reconciling nature. (p. 242)"

²⁰⁰Loder, "Conflict Resolution in Christian Education," p. 34.

²⁰¹Loder, p. 19. See also Loder's, "The Medium for the Message," in John H. Westerhoff III, ed. *A Colloquy on Christian Education* (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1972), pp. 71 - 78. We will return to this in the last chapter.

incorporate it into one's life even as it define the nature of one's life. Thus, Loder contends, that those working in Christian education have:

with the best of misguided intentions, led the Christian man into attempts at growth which only strangle the true inclinations of his vitality. Ironically, we have done this like perverted lovers; in seeking to preserve and perpetuate, we have instead radically devitalized. To deepen the irony we have taken the crowning outgrowth of Christianity's vitality - his willingness to work out the implications of his faith - and, through gimmicks and stereotypes, made it the instrument for stifling his interest in the educational enterprise of the Church.²⁰²

To remedy this situation, Loder turns to his interdisciplinary work in the area of psychodynamics and theology, one of the first educational theorists to do so.

Drawing upon the work of Jesse Ziegler, Loder contends that "learning takes place through the resolution of conflict."²⁰³ Phenomenologically speaking, conflict can be experienced in different modalities (subjective, empirical, interpretative, moral), but Loder's interest in Ziegler is not to explore the way conflict functions, but to explore the dynamics of conflict and resolution within an individual. The different modalities correspond to modalities of psychoanalytic theory. The Id would be predominate in the subjective; the Ego in its desire to test reality would be empirical; the Ego in self-observation predominates in the interpretative mode; and the Super-ego or Ego-ideal would predominate in the moral. Because, the "Id abhors a conflict in the way that nature abhors a vacuum," the Id will push towards a resolution of the conflict. The drive towards resolution of the conflict is also dominant in the self. Conflicts that arise in any of these modalities continually seek resolution in one's life. Sometimes the resolution to these conflicts are found in the Christian life, through Christian doctrine, apologetics, sermons, liturgy, even the writings of Scripture itself. But all resolutions to conflict, Loder argues, are tentative.

The task of the educator is to continually crack open the resolution and allow the conflict to push one to deeper levels of intelligibility. Another way of saying what Loder is proposing is to ensure that we live within the conflict and not be too quick to seek a resolution. "The teacher is engaged with whoever may be the learner - under whatever circumstances - in a deadly serious and sensitive business of pressing the Christian man to re-examine through all the modes of consciousness the resolution to conflict that his faith represents."²⁰⁴ The Christian life, echoing Kierkegaard, consists of crisis and conflict, and that "from crisis to crisis a man's relationship with

²⁰²Loder, p. 19.

²⁰³Loder, p. 20. See Jesse H. Ziegler, *Psychology and the Teaching Church* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962).

²⁰⁴Loder, p. 36. By educator, Loder would include church school teachers, clergy, and seminary or divinity school professors.

God must grow." There can be no sense of arrival. "Arrival in faith is as illusory as arrival in maturity," ²⁰⁵ Christian faith and the life that it expresses are not functional resolutions to existential and religious conflicts. The Christian life is a life of conflict that is continually being questioned through one's encounter with truth as experienced in the presence of God. To encounter the Living God is to be thrown into conflict. "Sometimes," Loder conjectured, "one must be thrown into such a confrontation. . . ." ²⁰⁶

Loder argued the truth of this claim both intellectually and personally. Indeed, as I have argued, he made these intellectual claims because he first knew them personally. They flowed from his own experience of the conflictual element of the Christian life. We began with this chapter with his first convictional experience and so it seems fitting to end with the second one.

In the thirty-eighth year of Loder's life he was thrown into an even greater conflict, more intense than the one he suffered as a student at Princeton. What he underwent that day and later came to realize from that experience shaped everything that Loder wrote for the rest of his life. It questioned the very core of his identity - his understanding of the Christian life, the power of God, what it means to be a professor of practical theology. One cannot begin to fathom the generative source of Loder's output without grasping the significance of these convictional moments. The 1970 event had an even more profound effect upon him. Therefore let us recount what happened.

On the 2nd September 1970, Loder left Princeton, New Jersey with his family on a trip to Quebec, Canada. As they were traveling north on the New York Thruway near Kingston, New York, they noticed a middle-aged woman standing near a disabled car, waving a white glove, looking for

²⁰⁵Loder, p. 34. Loder gives this example: "Let us suppose that for a certain person the Christian language and imagery may present a challenging fantasy in which he is able to see the resolution to the inner struggle of his life at his particular age. In the morning worship service he may be able to relax his ego boundaries for a calculated period of time and have pleasant mythical, musical, liturgical fantasies. Such a person in the early middle years may be momentarily strengthened in his sense of unity, and he may step out on Main Street [or "in the High Street" in the United Kingdom] in the sunlight of a Sunday noon in the happy belief that the Church community has renewed its consensual validation of his personal version of the Christian faith. The Church which permits this man to continue in his assumption fails him utterly. This good man will not have to go to hell to discover that he has been deceived. It will dawn upon him in the later middle years of his life when the weird system he has established between his personal effectiveness and the action of Christ in his life falls apart either in his work or in his love - or both. If in the face of the responsibilities of generativity with its threatening undertow, he can rush to the congregation of believers and be told that what he always assumed is still valid, he has not been helped but merely told the unholy lie that as a Christian man he can stop growing. If he is told that he can presume upon some sort of Christian 'arrival' which enables him to slip into 'stagnation,' then, in the worst possible sense, he has discovered the 'otherworldly' character of his faith. (p. 34)"

²⁰⁶*TTM2*, p. 8.

help. Loder turned off the road and noticed that she had a puncture.²⁰⁷ He got out his jack and proceeded to change the tire. Kneeling in front of the front fender he heard an "ear-splitting screech of brakes." On the Thruway, a sixty-four-old-man had fallen asleep at the wheel, veered off the road and rammed into the back of the car Loder was fixing, which then teetered off the jack onto his chest. The force of the impact pushed Loder and the car that was on top of him, pinning him under the car. He screamed for help and the only person available to do anything was his wife, Arlene. A slight woman, Arlene placed her hands under the bumper and prayed, "In the name of Jesus Christ, in the name of Jesus Christ. . . ." She lost partial consciousness as she lifted the car enough for Loder to remove himself. She broke a vertebrae doing so but was not conscious of it at the time. His right thumb has been torn off at the first joint, five ribs were broken, and the left lung was bleeding

As Loder came up from under the car, he recounts, "a steady surge of life was rushing through me, carrying with it two solid assurances." The first was an awareness of how much he loved all those around him, especially his family. The second was the knowledge that "this disaster had a purpose. He reassuringly repeated to his wife and children, "Don't worry; this has a purpose." Walking from the car to the side of the road, Loder tells us, "I never felt more conscious of the life that poured through me, nor more aware that this life was not my own. My well-being came from beyond my natural strength, . . ." Even though he was full of anger toward the driver that fell asleep at the wheel, "the most significant and memorable effect was not the pain, nor the anger, but the gracious nature of the life I was experiencing. . . . To me, life was never in doubt because I was being lived, it seemed, by a life not my own. I was very much in my body, but life was pouring into me from a gracious source beyond the power of that accident to damage or destroy me."²⁰⁸

At the hospital, it was the crucifixes in the lobby and the patients' rooms that provided the greater source of strength and even as they helped to articulate his condition. The images became images that mirrored a sense of the agony of his condition, but also the presence of God's love in the midst of the pain. "In that cruciform image of Christ," Loder writes, "the combination of physical pain and the assurance of a life greater than death gave objective expression and meaning to the sense of promise and transcendence that lived within the midst of my suffering." Here the image of Christ served as a hypnagogic vision or mirror that reoriented Loder's reality and reconfigured the way he "understood" what he was facing. As he entered surgery to mend a bleeding lung, he said he "knew that the power of life from beyond me once again rushed into my body." In the midst of his pain,

²⁰⁷For a full account see *TTM*, pp. 1ff and *TTM2*, pp. 9ff. In a footnote Loder writes, "The Kingston paper carried a story about the following accident, calling me a 'good Samaritan' but I was quite unaccustomed to stopping, because in my view standardized procedures for getting help were already a differentiated version of the good Samaritan. Thus I started on this venture more out of alarm and duty than out of any special compassion. (*TTM2*, p. 9)"

²⁰⁸*TTM2*, p. 11.

Loder remembers and characterizes the nature of this power pouring through him. A significant awareness and insight very much in keeping with everything Loder had come to know about the Holy up to this point. He recalls, "...my sense was that the power was not impersonal, but was emanating from the center of Another's awareness - an awareness that positively, even joyfully, intended my well-being. Even as I entertained that intuition, the physical pain decreased."²⁰⁹ Loder knew he was going to be alright and assured the hospital staff that this would be the case. He started to sing the hymn, "Fairest Lord Jesus."²¹⁰ Slowly, his bluish skin started to turn pink, the bleeding in his lung has ceased. Skin grafts scheduled to repair the tears in his back were cancelled. The head surgeon said to him, "A good surgeon knows when to get out of the way and let God do the healing."²¹¹

Loder returned to Princeton, thrown into a conflict of immense proportions. For almost two years, he wrestled with what he experienced and tried to make sense of it, both personally and intellectually. Part of him that wanted to forget everything that transpired. But that was difficult since daily he was reminded that he was missing a thumb. Loder knew that he had to be faithful to what he can come to know. This would not be easy.

This episode, in fact, raised countless new questions, disturbed several personal relationships, and forced me to reenvision the spiritual center of my vocation - not an easy matter when one is already teaching in a theological seminary. It undoubtedly presented me with the reality to which I have had to be true and from which I have departed only with a keen sense of having violated my own soul. I had been and am convicted.²¹²

His wife, Arlene, also pushed him to take the event seriously.²¹³ One early response was that he "had to act on the growing internal necessity to identify myself with the ministry of the church." For reasons unknown he resisted ordination, but completed the process and was ordained in the

²⁰⁹ *TTM2*, p. 12.

²¹⁰ A hymn traced back to 1662 associated with the Jesuits of Münster. Stanza 1: "Fairest Lord Jesus, Ruler of all nature, O Thou of God and man the Son, Thee will I cherish, Thee will I honor, Thou, my soul's Glory, Joy, and Crown." Stanza 2: "Fair are the meadows, Fairer still the woodlands, Robed in the blooming garb of spring: Jesus is fairer, Jesus is purer, Who makes th woeful heart to sing." Stanza 3: "Fair is the sunshine, Fairer still the moonlight, And all the twinkling, starry host: Jesus shines brighter, Jesus shines purer, Than all the angels heaven can boast." The words are usually sung to the tune CRUSADERS' HYMN, an old Westphalian folk song first mentioned in the *Schlesische Volkslieder* (Leipzig, 1842).

²¹¹ *TTM2*, p. 12.

²¹² *TTM2*, p. 13.

²¹³ Wright interview, April 2001.

Presbyterian Church (U. S. A.).²¹⁴ But ordination could not be a functional resolution to the conflict.

From an intellectual perspective, this experience was profoundly generative and remained so until his death. Above we identified the responsibility of the educator to continually crack open all previous resolutions to conflict, so that the conflict can push one to deeper levels of intelligibility. After 1970, Loder realized more than ever before that the true Teacher, as he would often say, was and is the Holy Spirit, who is "engaged with whoever may be the learner - under whatever circumstance - in a deadly serious and sensitive business of pressing the Christian . . . to re-examine through all the modes of consciousness the resolution to conflict that his faith represents." This convictional experience of the presence of Christ forced him to re-examine his own convictions and moved him to a deeper intelligibility into the "how" of the Christian life, specifically the identification of the Holy Spirit as convictor and the means by which the Holy Spirit interacts with the human spirit.

In 1973, Loder begins to push his analysis of human transformation and conflict even deeper than before. Bringing his prodigious knowledge of psychodynamics and his personalist anthropological leanings, Loder starts to explore the structure of Christian religious experience in order to determine authenticity and pathology. He posed the question in a research request extended to the Princeton Seminary community and the readership of *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, asking, "Can authenticity in mystical experiences rest to any degree upon something fundamentally behavioral such that these experiences can be engendered by subduing normal ego-functioning and heightening (whether by bio-chemical or social technique) certain organic processes? Or does authenticity depend irreducibly upon a person-to-person encounter with the holy God whose presence is at least as objective as our own?"²¹⁵ Loder had a bias towards the latter option, but he wanted to be able to account for this intellectually. Nevertheless, in the research request Loder was clear about his proposal and what he was trying to articulate for the theological and worshipping communities. Almost three years after the episode in New York, he could define what such authenticity looks like:

In authenticating Christian experience there is both a critical distinction and a positive relation between Divine otherness and human objectivity. Both are of crucial importance in the authentication of Christian experience. It is the distinction which must be made - regardless of how "fantastic" the unity, transcendence, and general excitement of the synthetic religious experience may seem - if one is to

²¹⁴On ordination, he writes, "This became a matter of conscience, not derived from any moral sense of obligation or abstract principles, but in the sense of knowing within oneself the necessary direction of one's integrity." *TTM2*, p. 13.

²¹⁵James E. Loder and Mark Laaser, "Authenticating Christian Experience: A Research Request," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, Volume 66 (1973): 121. Laaser shared this initial research project with Loder. Loder and Laaser asked that individuals write out their religious experiences and forward them to the seminary. At the time of the article's publication, they had already received three hundred responses.

separate those experiences which are creative of a person in his relation to God from those which are simply expansions of psychic potential and which, as is well known, can often turn into a "bad trip." It is in fact the integrity of the otherness of God that allows him to enter the "bad trip" where feeling states defy the realization of Divine otherness, where the synthetic god of fantastic feelings states could never be and there to do what God has always done to bring order out of chaos.

If, on the other hand, we now stress the positive relationship between "otherness" and human objectivity, then we suggest that there is a unique relationship between what is felt or sensed and what is declared when one encounters the otherness of God. This relationship which rests on the side of human objectivity is not bound to particular feeling states or self-perceptions, but is instead a pattern of interaction between what is felt and what is declared, between subject and object, between self and world. This relational pattern is an essential conformity with the major aspect of the creative process, and it is a pattern which distinguishes creativity from neurosis.²¹⁶

Loder proposes that in the Christian experience, the "human personality undergoes a creative act in the hands of God." In addition to the creative response is the awareness of one has been encountered by an otherness, the otherness of God.²¹⁷

One's encounter with the presence of Christ is understood as a humanizing experience which yields a heightened and not a diminished sense of subjectivity. This enhanced awareness of one's own historical concreteness is grounded in God's address to the individual. This is an "incarnational significance." He explains that "there is in this experience a clear-cut claim to an encounter with the sacred such that the otherness of God gives rise to a heightened capacity to deal objectively with one's own situation. It is an incarnational concept to assert that the Divine otherness confirms the historical objectivity of man." It is through the dialogical exchanged, in the Divine-human encounter, that "God creates human nature in and for history." In this exchange one become conscious of one's individuality. In other words, "in creating the individual the process historicizes him by heightening his capacity to deal with the objective realities of his present situation and by opening him in an enuring way to the future."²¹⁸

Throughout the 1970's, Loder enters into a season of scanning through the psychological and theological literature, as well as a plumbing the depths of his own experience in order to give voice to what he encountered.²¹⁹ This period of struggle lasting almost ten years culminates in 1981 with the publication of *The Transforming Moment: Understanding Convictional Experiences* (and a second

²¹⁶Loder, pp. 121-122. This distinction between creativity and neurosis comes from the work of Harold Rugg (1886-1960), *Imagination* (New York: Harpers, 1963), especially Chapter 15.

²¹⁷Loder, p. 123.

²¹⁸Loder, p. 124.

²¹⁹We will explore the influences upon this thinking in the next chapter.

edition in 1989), presenting what one commentator has correctly identified as "a general epistemology that will account for all moments of transformation."²²⁰ While I think this is an accurate assessment, such a reading misses the deeper concern of the work. As we shall see, Loder turns to epistemological considerations in order to grasp what he would call the logic of transformation. But even patterns of transformation in the human experience (typical in acts of discovery and in the work of the imagination) need to be transformed in order for them to yield a knowledge of God.

The Transforming Moment is a seminal work and marks a turning point in the unfolding of Loder's thought. Before his experience in 1970, he was preoccupied with the role of conflict in Christian education and how this conflict is played out throughout the states of human development. After 1970, with the publication of *The Transforming Moment*, Loder's work is taken up, as it were, into the larger and more significant framework of discerning the way the Holy Spirit encounters an individual. Psychological constructs of transformation are not sufficient to "explain" the change that occurs in the life of one encountered by Jesus Christ in a moment of conviction.²²¹ Theological reflection upon the "how" of the Holy Spirit is required - an area of discussion painfully lacking within theological circles. At the beginning of *The Transforming Moment*, Loder establishes his agenda:

Theology, in contrast to the human sciences, has concentrated on *what* to believe and it has paid relatively less attention to *how* one comes to believe what is theologically sound. Most of the theological answers to *how* have been either subtly turned into questions of *what* or they have been relegated to the Holy Spirit. However, of all doctrines central to Christianity, that one is most ill-defined, fraught with mystery, and lost in confusion. How the Holy Spirit teaches, comforts, afflicts, and leads into "all truth" [John 16:13] is largely a theological blank. Yet, notice - it has substance enough to be threatening. If one claims to have had an experience of the Holy Spirit, he or she is immediately suspected of becoming theologically unsound. This sort of threat and suspicion is a case of ignorance controlling orthodoxy and indicates a state of affairs that ought not to continue.²²²

Beginning with *The Transforming Moment* and continuing through his death in 2002, his life work can best be understood when it is viewed as being consumed with a passionate desire to take up this challenge: to fill this theological blank or void by offering a pneumatology that accounts for the

²²⁰Volney P. Gay, *Living Light*, 18(1981): 276-277.

²²¹Loder recounts: "...before 1970 I was doing all my teaching [in Christian education] within a basic psychoanalytic model, that conflict learning is basic to psychoanalysis. So I was upgrading psychoanalysis a little bit. But that was the basic shape of my understanding. After 1970 I realized it was the Spirit of God who creates the problem and guides us into truth." Interview with Wright, 13th April 2001.

²²²*TTM*, p. 13. The what/how distinction here is an extension and continuation of the concerns raised above by Kierkegaard and echoed by Loder in his doctoral dissertation..

"how" of human experience.²²³ The publication of *The Knight's Move: The Relational Logic of the Spirit in Theology and Science* (with physicist, W. Jim Neidhardt) in 1992 and *The Logic of the Spirit: Human Development in Theological Perspective* in 1998 further contribute to this vision.²²⁴ In the next chapter we will analyze these three works, as well as articles written over the last thirty years which give voice to what I would summarize and characterize as Loder's *relational phenomenological pneumatology*.

On Monday, the 5th November 2001, Loder had a massive stroke in a setting far removed from the world most familiar with this thought - the lobby of a bank. Lying on the floor and just before entering into a coma from which he never recovered, Loder cried out to the strangers seeking his welfare, "Please pray for me." After four days on life-support, he died in Princeton on the 9th November at the age of 69. On the morning of 14th November, he was interred in the Princeton Seminary cemetery plot of Nassau Presbyterian Church, Princeton, New Jersey. Later that afternoon, at the Service of Witness to the Resurrection held in the Miller Chapel of Princeton Theological Seminary, president Thomas W. Gillespie gave tribute to the great themes of his life, of Loder's central affirmations that "the void is trumped by the holy. Rather than a nothing, there is someone. Instead of absence, there is presence, the presence of the one who said to Martha and to us, "I am the resurrection and the life. . . . (John 11:25)"²²⁵

²²³Reflecting Loder's critique of the socializing force of the human sciences, he also sees the discipline of theology being hindered by such assumptions. "Surely the human sciences are not designed to deal with extraordinary experience in terms that make it convincing to the experiencer. They are designed to exorcize the demons of the extraordinary for the sake of sustaining and controlling day-to-day life. Yet often theology, which should be the language of conviction, has also had trouble with such experiences. They are too subjective for those preoccupied with rigorous demands for theological thinking, and more unique and particularized than can be coped with by highly generalized theological systems." *TTM*, p. 11.

²²⁴On the Friday before he died, Loder sent to his publisher the final draft of another work in this undertaking, *Educational Ministry in the Logic of the Spirit*, to be published in 2002, articulating Loder's theory of Christian education in the Spirit based on his lectures given at Princeton spanning almost forty years. Wright, "Ruination Unto Redemption," p. 84. In a conversation with me several weeks before he died, Loder conveyed that after the publication of *Educational Ministry* and in retirement, he planned to write a book on Kierkegaard and practical theology, an introductory volume to practical theology for students, and a commentary on the Gospel of John. Dana Wright is editing the *Festschrift* offered in Loder's honor and will be entitled *Redemptive Transformation in Practical Theology* (Eerdmans, 2003).

²²⁵Thomas W. Gillespie, "Words of Welcome," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* XXIII(2002), p. 64.

IV. Conclusion

"What is a lifetime?" and "Why do I live it?"²²⁶ *The Logic of the Spirit* is built upon these two fundamental, yet related existential questions. These questions absorbed Loder throughout his life. Here and elsewhere he challenges the reader to endure the conflict such questions inevitably generate. They are questions that the human spirit, through the stages of life, will struggle to answer both consciously and unconsciously. Connected with the answer is humanity's inexorable search for meaning, even in the face of death. This drive of the human spirit is illustrated by Miguel de Unamuno's (1864-1936) idea that what distinguishes human beings from other creatures is that humans bury their dead. Reflecting upon Unamuno's observation, Loder observes:

We speak our words over the dead body. We will not let death have the last word. This is a mark of the human spirit that something in us knows we can overcome this thing. Death stops the heartbeat but does not quench the human spirit; its inherent logic tells us that there is a way to transcend and transform death. Even when the spirit itself chooses death, whether in suicide or baptism, it is in hope of a better life. Even in the pathetic cry of the abused child, "If I die, then will you love me?" there is transcendence that wants to make use of death to achieve another higher end. What is a lifetime, and why do I live it? This cry arises out of the human spirit, sometimes in anguish, sometimes in awe-struck silence, but always a call to someone or some place beyond the self.²²⁷

The question remains whether the human spirit will answer these questions from within the limited scope of the self, or look beyond itself to another, to a *Thou* - a Convictor - who has the power to constitute, define, affirm, and ultimately love the "I" in a way one could never do on one's own. It is to Loder's understanding of the logic of the Spirit, his effort to articulate the logic of the *Thou*, that we now turn.

²²⁶LS, pp. 3ff.

²²⁷LS, p. 4. Cf. Miguel de Unamuno, *Tragic Sense of Life*, trans. J. E. Crawford Fitch (New York: Dover Publications, 1954).

Chapter Two

A Theology of Conviction: Loder's Relational Phenomenological Pneumatology

"Perhaps the mutual enhancement of mind and Spirit will yield up new ways of conceiving the life of God in our midst, so that the communion of saints may again - as at its Pentecostal inception - be ultimately defined by no other reality than the Spiritual Presence of God in Jesus Christ at work to restored an anguished creation to its Creator."

James E. Loder,
From the "Epilogue"
The Transforming Moment

Although Loder began his academic career at Princeton teaching the philosophy of Christian education and retained this preoccupation through his life, 1970 marks a momentous shift in his thinking, a turn to an examination of the Holy Spirit as educator, specifically how the Holy Spirit educates a life in the way of Jesus Christ. As we saw at the end of the last chapter, Loder avers, "How the Holy Spirit teaches, comforts, afflicts, and leads into "all truth" [John 16:13] is largely a theological blank."¹ Beginning with the publication of *The Transforming Moment: Understanding Convictional Experiences*, Loder responds to the challenge by filling the blank, constructing a theology of the Holy Spirit that is grounded in the Reformed theological tradition, yet informed by insights into the dynamics of human transformation and experiences of conviction. Loder believed that theology "should be the language of conviction."² That is, theology must be conceived as the language of one convicted, an articulation of *life* as mediated *by, in, and through* the Holy Spirit and *for* the glory of God. For thirty years Loder developed and creatively employed a unique psycho-spiritual, epistemological framework that articulates a vision of the Christian life as primarily an experience of conviction by the Spiritual Presence of Christ. As we shall see in this chapter, Loder's work offers theologians a new framework for talking about "how" the Holy Spirit transforms human life.

Instead of examining Loder's thought in the order of publication, I would prefer to discuss his work between 1970 and 2002 as a whole, identifying themes that cluster around what I have termed a *relational phenomenological pneumatology*. The drawback of such an approach does not allow one to see the development of Loder's thought over time. While this is important, it is not my primary concern. Alternatively, what is more important is articulating the generative core of Loder's thought and seeing the wider implications of his contribution.

¹*TTM*, p. 13

²*TTM*, p. 11.

I. An Overview of Loder's Major Contributions

Before we proceed, a brief overview of the major publication to occupy our discussion is warranted. *The Transforming Moment: Understanding Convictional Experiences* (1981/1989), *The Knight's Move: The Relational Logic of the Spirit in Theology and Science*, co-authored with physicist, W. Jim Neidhardt, (1992) and *The Logic of the Spirit: Human Development in Theological Perspective* (1998), together form Loder's three major contributions to the field of practical theology. Let us consider them in order.

As we saw in the previous chapter, *The Transforming Moment* is Loder's attempt to give voice to his experiences of conviction. The eleven years spanning 1970 to 1981, concluding with the publication of *TTM*, was a period of extraordinary intellectual searching, yielding the insights usually associated with Loder's *oeuvre*. Thrown into a conflict of immense proportions, he turned to many sources to help make sense of what he experienced, eventually producing a new theory of knowing. He turned to Michael Polanyi's *The Tacit Dimension*, Regin Prenter's *Spiritus Creator*, George Hendry's *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*. From the title we know his primary influence is Kierkegaard, who spoke at length about "the Moment" as the "fullness of time," the time of "rebirth" when one becomes a "new person" through the encounter with the Absolute Paradox.³ Dana Wright explains that, "What the accident made available to him was the convictional courage to recognize and act upon the Church's confession that our human participation in the work of the Holy Spirit, not the transformational capacities of the human spirit alone, finally makes human transformation itself transformational."⁴

The Transforming Moment is the fruit of almost ten years of enormous intellectual and personal struggle. It was written for the theologian; as such it is a rigorous intellectual reply to the Princeton Seminary faculty, many of whom were extremely skeptical and highly critical of his approach to theology in general, and his depiction of the Christian experience in particular after 1970.⁵ Their unease was rooted in the fact that Loder's experientially-based theology was at appeared to be at odds with the Reformed tradition and the general approach to theology at Princeton. We get an indication of this struggle in a handwritten prayer that was found after Loder's death in a desk draw in his Hodge House

³Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments/ Johannes Climacus*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 15-19ff.

⁴From the biographical essay Dana Wright is preparing for the Loder *Festschrift*.

⁵Princeton Seminary gave Loder tenure just prior to the 1970 accident. *The Transforming Moment* "had to be written," Loder explains, "to tell them [Princeton Seminary] what they hired was still here. . . ." Wright interview, April 2001. As a bastion of Reformed/ Presbyterian thought, Loder's Princeton colleagues considered his approach to be more "Methodist," than Reformed. He believes, however, that there is an intentional act of repression at work in his own denomination, the Presbyterian Church (U. S. A.). Studies have shown that 80 percent of Presbyterian clergy and more than half of the laity have had convictional experiences. But they are not discussed or shared within the worshiping community and "much of modern theology to discredit convictional experiences. . . is partly responsible for this repression. . . . (*TTM*, p. 11)."

study:

This is who I am. This is who I must be. The one who was convicted on the thruway and thus renewed [by] his "convictor" of several years before. If teaching this way is destructive to my fellows or classes who want something else, if this means I lose [my] job and esteem, then at least I do not lose my Lord. I do not by this expect to stop my intellectual work. But I do hereby stop, in the name of Jesus Christ, any effort to say that I can exhaustively deprive myself by my own efforts. Thou art holding me fast, and I am so grateful I will be obedient to the heavenly vision, as Paul said, and not fall away (Heb. 6: 4-7).⁶

To not be faithful to the experience and to himself would thus be to deny the work of the Holy Spirit and thus, as the authors to the Hebrews explains, "commit apostasy."

Due to the nature of his audience, *TTM* is an exceptionally difficult book to comprehend and not easily accessible - even to the most erudite scholar. It is very technical, containing complex moves through many disciplines - psychology, theology, epistemology, existentialist philosophy, and phenomenology. The difficulty is due, in part, to its methodology. Loder's command of psychological and theological concepts and the way he dialectically weaves them together to form a new conceptual framework can easily alienate and frustrate the reader who is not willing to enter intuitively into his logic. In the second edition he provides a glossary of terms. But even the glossary needs a glossary.⁷ One commentator began his review with this caution, "It will take more than a month to absorb the impact of this book," and another states outright that this is a "tough, mind-stretching volume."⁸ Many reviewers note that *TTM* is for the "serious reader" and "deserves serious attention."⁹ Because of these

⁶I am grateful to Dana Wright for a copy of this prayer. The scriptural reference is particularly poignant: "For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they then commit apostasy, since they crucify the Son of God on their own account and hold him up to contempt (Hebrews 6: 4-7)." Loder lived in the house that was built on the seminary grounds by Charles Hodge (1797-1878), the most influential American theologian of the nineteenth century.

⁷Frank Rogers, Jr., makes a similar point in *Religious Education* 86(1991): 323-325. Despite the difficulty of the text and the glossary, "the person who is willing to dialogue with it will find themselves in the midst of a book that articulates a compelling vision. (p. 325)" If one who is able to attend to Loder's argument and enter into his world, one reviewer believes, then what Loder has offered might have the potential to "help us grasp a truly new world." John E. McKenna, *Perspectives on Science and Faith* 43 (1991): 201.

⁸John E. McKenna, *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*, 43(1991): 199; Richard A. Hunt, *Pastoral Psychology*, 30 (1982): 194. James W. Fowler says *TTM* has a kind of "enchantment," he writes, "I could tell you in two pages what the book is about,. But to really do it justice, in the subtlety and richness of its argument, I would need much more space . . ." James E. Loder & James W. Fowler, "Conversations on Fowler's *Stages of Faith* and Loder's *The Transforming Moment*," *Religious Education*, 77 (1982): 140,143.

⁹Rogers, Jr.: 323-324; John F. Russell, *Theological Studies*, 43 (1982): 185.

obstacles it has not received the attention it deserves.

The complexity of the *TTM* has rendered it inaccessible to many theologians, as well as the average reader. Approximately twelve reviews of both editions all favorably applaud Loder for his contribution to the study of religious experiences. It is generally assumed that Loder is writing for clinical psychologists whose patients have experienced transformation or for clergy working in the parish.¹⁰ This is a fair assessment. Loder is writing for the practitioner, but he is first and foremost writing for the theologian - and not only for the practical theologian. It is perhaps this confusion of purpose that Loder's work has been relatively ignored by practical theologians and dogmatic theologians alike. Loder is writing primarily as a kind of theologian-theorist who seeks to provide an interpretative framework through which one can identify the work of the Holy Spirit in the world. I would argue that a more accurate reading would be to see Loder as a theologian of conviction. His aim is to get the attention of theologians, insisting that an understanding of convictional knowing must be incorporated into the way we think theologically about the work of the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, the difficulty of Loder's thought and writing-style suggest that he is pushing language and ideas in order to be as expansive as the knowledge of God received in moments of conviction. Loder observed that Paul Lehmann "has often been criticized for the polymorphous complexity of his prose." It is a critique that could equally be applied to Loder. "However, it seems to me," Loder continues speaking of Lehmann, "that one rarely makes such a criticism without at the same time acknowledging that something important is going on when he speaks and writes." Loder sees Lehmann's style as "convictional," in that "it reflects his patient struggle to weave language around the structure of conviction so as to have it finally emerge as an expression of - and expansion upon - the elements of that conviction."¹¹ All of the above serves as an apt description of Loder's style, possessing a polymorphous complexity that seeks to articulate the inarticulable.

The complexity is significantly heightened with the publication of *The Knight's Move*. Co-authored with W. Jim Neidhardt (who was, before his untimely death in 1992, Associate Professor of Physics at the New Jersey Institute of Technology in Newark, New Jersey), this challenging work is an exercise in the interdisciplinary study of theology and science. The approach that Loder used in his doctoral dissertation on the relationship between theology and psychology is applied toward the theology/science dialogue. Their aim is to find patterns of correlation that do not reduce one field to the other, nor create a third field through amalgamation. Loder's move toward scientific epistemology might appear to be a strange move, an aberrant interest within his wider concerns. However, this is more than a simple curiosity about contemporary scientific theories. His turn towards science is to reinforce the

¹⁰Tom Brownell, *Epiphany*, 3 (1982): 90; Volney P. Gay, *Living Light* 18 (1981): 277.

¹¹Loder, "The Fashioning of Power: A Christian Perspective on the Life-Style Phenomenon," p. 187.

inherent relationality of human existence. Loder demonstrates proficient knowledge of the history of science and is fully conversant with Einsteinian and post-Einsteinian physics. The study of theology and science are not "incompatible;" they are "complementary." The identification of complementarity means that underneath the interdisciplinary dialogue is a deeper concern: to illustrate and "to stress the relational nature of reality."¹²

The constitutional structure of reality and the way we come to a knowledge of reality are inherently relational. His interest in relationality, informed by Kierkegaard, had preoccupied Loder for quite some time. Here, Loder turns to a consideration of Chalcedonian christology and suggests where we see relationality most powerfully at work is revealed to us definitely in the inner nature of Jesus Christ. This theological claim is then used as the rubric through which Loder comes to view reality as constructed by the Spiritual Presence of Christ and through whom all knowledge is modeled. "In Christ's nature as fully God and fully human, we have the definition of relationship through which all other expressions of personal, social, and cultural relatedness can be viewed." In such a model, "the inner nature of Jesus Christ ultimately defines the scope and limits of the relational model; not the reverse." Their purpose is to "reveal the illuminative and explanatory significance of viewing all creation through the eyes of faith in Jesus Christ."¹³ The Illuminator and Explainer is the Holy Spirit, who, participating in and with Jesus Christ, reveals the relational structure of reality to the human spirit and draws the human spirit into relationship with Christ. The movement of the Holy Spirit is relational - Spirit to spirit.¹⁴ This is an act of creativity in which reality and knowledge of the self are oriented after the movement of Christ.¹⁵

The title of the book refers to the move of the knight in the game of chess, as well as to Kierkegaard's portrayal of the Christian life as the "knight of faith."¹⁶ In chess, "the knight's move is unique because it alone goes around corners. . . . This meaningful combination of continuity [of a set

¹²*TKM*, pp. 13, 8.

¹³*TKM*, p. 13.

¹⁴We will explore this more fully later in the chapter.

¹⁵Although Loder and Neidhardt address epistemological concerns, they never bring them into dialogue with contemporary epistemological theorists, such as Richard Rorty or Paul Ricoeur. Dana R. Wright suggests that *TKM* "may lose some of the force of its argument because it is not situated specifically in the current debate on epistemology." *Koinonia* IV(1992): 276.

¹⁶He makes reference to the knight of faith in *NRC*, pp. 442ff; *RPCF*, pp. 145-146, 177-178; *TKM*, 104-105ff, and *LS*, pp. 334-336. Kierkegaard explains that the knight of faith, ". . . takes delight in everything, and whenever one sees him taking part in a particular pleasure, he does it with the persistence which is the mark of the earthly man whose soul is absorbed in such things. . . . Yet he does not do the least thing except by virtue of the absurd [the God-man received in faith]." *Fear and Trembling*, p. .

sequence] and discontinuity [an unpredictable turn] in an otherwise linear set of possibilities has led some to refer to the creative act of discovery in any field of research as a 'knight's move' in intelligence."¹⁷ Loder sees this continuity and discontinuity in the Christian life, in the "knight of faith." So that "Kierkegaard's 'knight of faith' undertake[s] a unique move within the rules of the human game, but faith transposes the whole idea of a 'knight's move' into the mind of the Chess Master Himself."¹⁸ He further presses the metaphor:

[C]hess is a game of multiple possibilities and interlocking strategies, so a chess master must combine the continuity represented by the whole complex of the game with the unpredictable decisions he must make every time it is his turn. A master chess player, then, does not merely follow the rules; in him the game becomes a construct of consciousness. The better the player the more fully the game comes into its own as a creation of human intelligence. Similarly, for Kierkegaard, the knight of faith is a unique figure in human existence. The knight shows how, by existing in faith as a creative act of Christ's Spirit, human existence comes into its own as an expression of the mind of Christ. Thus, the ultimate form of a "knight's move" is a creative act raised to the nth power by *Spiritus Creator*, but it still partakes fully in the concrete pieces and patterns that comprise the nature of the human game and the game of nature.¹⁹

Thus one becomes a knight of faith when human intelligence is "taken up," as it were, into the mind of Christ. But this is not absorption or annihilation of human intelligence (or individual identity), it is a mind that has been expanded through the encounter with Christ, an identity that has become heightened and "more real" through and in the corresponding relationship with Christ.

Like *The Transforming Moment*, *The Knight's Move* is very abstract and has suffered the same kind of fate in its receptivity. Reviewers, both theologians and physicists alike, have praised Loder and Neidhardt's contribution to the science and theology debate, describing the book as "ambitious, worthwhile, unique, . . . [a book] which one must read again (and perhaps again)." It has been seen as "imaginative," exuding the "creative enthusiasm of the writers."²⁰ Most notably, Christopher B. Kaiser, who has written widely on science and theology, has acknowledged the magnitude of their contribution and their accuracy in fathoming the theological implications of complementarity.²¹ Reviews have also critiqued their writing style as being too complicated. Acknowledging "the high level of erudition" in

¹⁷*TKM*, p. 2.

¹⁸*TKM*, p. 2.

¹⁹*TKM*, p. 2.

²⁰Richard Carlson, *Zygon*, 31 (1994): 731; Mike Alsford, *Science and Christian Belief*, 6 (1994): 134.

²¹Christopher B. Kaiser, "Quantum Complementarity and Christological Dialectic," W. Mark Richardson & Wesley J. Wildman, *Religion and Science: History, Method, Dialogue* (New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 291-298.

the book, one reviewer commented that after many sentences he found himself thinking of Augustine's (354-430) confession, "My soul is restless until it rests in Thee."²² Nevertheless, it is clear that *The Knight's Move*, "makes a very important contribution," to the theology and science dialogue, but it has "yet to be fully appreciated by scholars working in this area."²³

That *The Knight's Move* opens with a foreword by the theologian, Thomas F. Torrance signifies Loder's indebtedness to Torrance's thought and a testimony of their close friendship. What Loder found so appealing is the centrality of relationality in Torrance's theology.²⁴ Torrance remarks that *TKM* is "charged with real therapeutic power, as well as heuristic force, in the way it deepens and carries forward what the great Michael Polanyi called 'personal knowledge', without yielding either to the subjectivism or the objectivism upon which contemporary thinking so often founders, and thereby provides our human and spiritual culture with the healing vision of wholeness which it needs so desperately."²⁵ Loder and Neidhart offer a relational view of reality, "a potentially redemptive way of restructuring our thinking," to help heal the "problems of dualism and fragmentation that seem so endemic to our scientific culture."²⁶ The reason why dualism and fragmentation have been so destructive, and the drive behind Loder's stress upon relationality, is because they have led to a distortion of human existence. Cornel West talks about "the normative gaze" of a technological understanding of science which favors a neutrality of observation. This "detached mentality," as Loder calls it, "is responsible for all 'neutral' classificatory schemes which produce all the 'isms' - from individualism to sexism to classism, as well

²²Richard H. Bube, *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*, 45 (1993): 271. Michael Palmer wrote the most critical review, stating that although *TKM* is "provocative," it "is also disorienting and confusing at numerous points in the discussion, somewhat uncertain of its audience, and ultimately unsatisfying in the details of the argument." The *TKM*, "is worth read, though doing so represents a considerable commitment of intellectual energy for a modest return." *Paraclete* 28 (1994): 31-32. Besides style and complexity, he offers no substantive critique of the text.

²³W. Mark Richardson, *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 16 (1995): 347.

²⁴*TKM* is firmly rooted in the Barthian/Torrance/Polanyi tradition with its emphasis upon the relational or the perichoretic. Alsford suggests that there is an over-emphasis on bi-polarity in Loder's understanding of relationality. "... perhaps an engagement with Derridian reconstruction of binary opposition as manifestations of enforced hierarchy and a metaphysic of presence might shed some light on this matter," *Science and Christian Belief*, 6(1994):134.

²⁵*TKM*, p. xii. The foreword is printed verbatim as a review in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 48 (1995): 139-140. Torrance enthusiastically endorses this work as "the most exciting and uplifting book of its kind that I have read in recent years. It is a work to read again and again until its creative and liberating insights soak into one's being and spirit and open the imagination and the mind to new horizons of possibility in human enterprise. (p. 140)"

²⁶*TKM*, p. 15.

as racism."²⁷ But the detachment is dangerous precisely because it depersonalizes the self. It leads to a bifurcation of reality.

This view distorts not only human existence but nature itself. It leads to using prestructured conceptions in an attempt to manipulate an infinitely rich and variegated natural order and to control intrinsically open-ended events. It obscures the inner and often unique order of nature, and eliminates meaning and purpose for persons and relationships - even as it ignores the significance of persons themselves. Not only is the long-range significance of this dualistic distortion evident in the widely desecrated fragmentation of nature, society, culture, and personality, but current optimism about "science and technology" promises to make the distortion worse.²⁸

But Loder does not want to critique culture. Instead, he wants to engage in "an interdisciplinary search for ways, models, and patterns by which we can approach the inherent order of creation and facilitate some reintegration of the fragmented fields of study in our culture."²⁹ The "real therapeutic power" of this relational heuristic is identifying the action or power of God, of, "What God is doing to make and keep human life human."³⁰ This leads us to a consideration of Loder's last major work

The Logic of the Spirit: Human Development in Theological Perspective appeared in 1998 and is a reworking of his lectures on human development given at Princeton Seminary for more than twenty years. In many ways this work (and to a lesser degree *TKM*) is a response to and a critique of what is known as models of "faith development," typified by the work of James Fowler.³¹ Loder sees the human spirit possessing a logic of its own that cannot be neatly explained in developmental categories. To show this, once again Loder turns to Kierkegaard. Instead of forcing Kierkegaard's stages of existence - Aesthetic, Ethical, Religiousness A, and Religiousness B - into a diachronic pattern of human development, Loder sees the stages as "aspects of a more fundamental argument embracing the whole of existence" that are experienced at all stages of human development.³² Here we find themes that Loder has amplified throughout his life.

²⁷Cornel West, *Prophesy Deliverance* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982) cited in *TKM*, p. 7.

²⁸*TKM*, p. 7.

²⁹*TKM*, p. 7.

³⁰This is what Paul Lehmann has referred to as "the politics of God." Cf. Paul Lehmann, *The Transfiguration of Politics* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975) and *Ethics in Christian Context* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 123. Cited in Loder, "The Fashioning of Power," p. 201.

³¹James Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981); *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian: Adult Development and Christian Faith* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984); Craig Dykstra & Sharon Parks, eds. *Faith Development and Fowler* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1986).

³²*LS*, p. ix.

...the human spirit is the uninvited guest in every study conducted in the human sciences. It is inherently relational, transformational, self-transcending, and the dynamic basis of choice; it is the dynamism that drives human development forward. Yet it is regularly ignored in favor of more empirical considerations. To be sure, it is always within the matrix of the physical, natural, and material order where the human spirit can and must be understood. But if we ask which way is "forward" in the course of human development, then we must have a theological frame of reference that grounds and guides the human spirit without reducing its dynamism to simplistic notions of adaptation.³³

Adaptation, or processes of socialization, cannot provide for the deepest desires of the human spirit in its drive for meaning and purpose. This need can only be realized when the human spirit is, to quote Kierkegaard, "transparently grounded in the power that posits it," grounded in the Holy Spirit.³⁴

Loder sees Kierkegaard's understanding of human existence placed between "two absconds: the negative absurd, which points to the tragic futility and ultimate meaninglessness of existence, which he terms, 'despair'; and the positive absurd, that human nature is redeemed by God who enters his own creation as fully divine and fully human, Kierkegaard's 'God-man' of faith." We must choose by which absurd to live. To not choose is by default a choice for the negative, a choice for death. By contrast, "a choice for the positive absurd puts death in the context of the Creator of the universe, who, by entering redemptively into the midst of human history, established the ultimate meaning of creation, including the death that pervades it. This Spirit of God transforms human existence for the appropriation of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ."³⁵ But, it needs to be stressed, this is not just an abstract choice to ponder, nor is it an intellectual game one can play. It "is a critical and constructive way to look at the stuff and substance of the whole life span and its place in creation."³⁶ It is a matter of life and death.

An interdisciplinary model is developed whereby "a Christian theological interpretation must be allowed to influence our studies of human development."³⁷ The means of fathoming human nature from a theological perspective comes "through an understanding of the human spirit in the context of a Christian theology of the Holy Spirit." Even in this study, one can see that Loder is trying to make a space for the person actively engaged with the world. He writes that, "It should be noticed that the functionalism, structuralism, and empiricism toward which the human sciences are inclined keep them in a dualistic Newtonian world, where the person of the investigator is bracketed for the sake of objectifying the findings and meeting the canons of an empirical test." These objectifying patterns

³³LS, pp. xii-xiii.

³⁴LS, p. xiii.

³⁵LS, p. x.

³⁶LS, p. x.

³⁷LS, p. xi.

actually limit an understanding of reality. Loder wants to "move toward a post-Newtonian, scientifically postmodern view of reality, which," in his estimation, "has always been the character and prerogative of the Holy Spirit in Christian theology."³⁸ Loder wants to search for a full understanding of reality that is subjectively appropriated by the self and takes into consideration the knower's involvement and participation in what is known.

Like his earlier pieces, *The Logic of the Spirit* has been critically acclaimed as an "important" and "challenging" work, welcomed as a needed corrective to reductionistic, non-theological considerations of human development and will most likely become a standard text in theological education.³⁹ Also, like his other works, this is not an easy text to summarize or fathom and requires repeated readings.⁴⁰ One reviewer clearly identifies that "Loder's knowledge and experience are wide ranging, and his methodology demanding." This is not due to the obscurity or complexity of this thought, but because our present frameworks of knowledge will be "consistently challenged by coming to terms with Loder's argument."⁴¹ The highest praise for Loder's approach comes from Torrance: "What strikes me, perhaps above all is the depth of Loder's compassion, which informs all his analytical and therapeutical thought about the relationality between the human spirit and the divine Spirit. No writer or thinker, to my knowledge, has penetrated so deeply, illuminatingly, lovingly, and convincingly into the often tortured tangles of the human spirit, at different stages of its development, and brought to bear upon it the creative and healing presence of the divine that characterizes the logic of the Spirit."⁴²

Two fundamental, existential questions concern Loder in *The Logic of the Spirit*, questions which he also sees within the Kierkegaardian authorship: "What is a lifetime?" and "Why do I live it?" For an answer to the first question, Loder turns to the human sciences. To reply to the second, he develops a theology of human existence. But they cannot be separated.⁴³ Instead, he utilizes a relational methodology and holds them in creative tension. The perspective of the human sciences, the "view from the below" is brought into dialog and corrected by the "view from above," a theological consideration

³⁸LS, p. xiii.

³⁹Steven S. Ivy, *Journal of Pastoral Care* 53 (1999): 495.

⁴⁰Eric G. Flett, *Christian Scholar's Review*, XXI (2000): 622-623. Flett writes, "Those who are willing to commit themselves to repeated readings will be rewarded and taken into a deeper understanding of human personhood and divine grace (p. 623)."

⁴¹Flett, p. 623.

⁴²Thomas F. Torrance, *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 20 (1999): 317. Torrance claims, "This is one of the most remarkable books I have ever read in the interdisciplinary fields of human, natural, and theological science (p. 316)."

⁴³LS, p. x.

of the human spirit as defined in and through its relationship with the Holy Spirit. It is worth quoting Loder's summary argument at length, because I would argue that it also captures the motivation behind *The Transforming Moment* and *The Knight's Move*, which is why I prefer to consider these works as a whole.

My argument. . . is not primarily one for the existence of God; it is for the human spirit itself: for its reality, its legitimacy, its remarkable genius, its genuine but blind longing for the Spirit of God - and its tragic end when that longing is not satisfied. We need to find in our theological understanding of what it means to be human the divine response to the outcry of the human spirit.

Because the abyss between the human and the divine is humanly unfathomable, it must be crossed by the act of God; but the argument from above is that this has already been done in the paradox of God's becoming human while remaining fully God in Jesus Christ. What remains for us is the awakening to this reality and to all that it implies for the conviction, illumination, and sanctification of the development of persons. This, . . . takes place centrally Spirit-to-spirit.⁴⁴

Which means that the answer to these questions "must finally be bestowed by the Creator Spirit."⁴⁵

With this initial overview of the primary objectives in each work, we can move to a more detailed consideration of Loder's theology, with special attention to some of the formative influences upon his thought. This analysis will be further supplemented by articles written during this period in which Loder sketches out ideas that are later incorporated into these three major works.

II. Convictional Knowing

After his New York Thruway experience, Loder needed a way to talk about the actuality of religious experiences which were both objectively real, yet could not be subjectively appropriated through cognition. For this he turned to the philosopher of religion, Willem F. Zuurdeeg.⁴⁶ Beginning with the conventional distinction between *cognitive* and *motive* language used by theologians, Zuurdeeg adds a third type, the *convictional*. Convictional language is not simply the language of emotion, subjectivist considerations of reality. It is a language that points beyond words, which has its origins

⁴⁴LS, p. 12. Lucy Bregman helpfully summarizes Loder's intentions: "Loder's theological perspective attempts to place human development within the wider sphere of the Holy Spirit's creative activity and to locate and describe how the human spirit acts and respond to the divine Spirit through all the phases of the lifespan." *The Journal of Religion*, 80 (2000)

⁴⁵LS, p. 14.

⁴⁶Zuurdeeg was initially associated with the logical positivists of the Vienna School. Cf. Allan Janik & Stephen Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (New York: Touchstone, 1973).

within the situation of the person and the community that uses such language.⁴⁷ Zuurdeeg sees convictional language as striking a balance between purely cognitive, abstract thinking (the common parlance of the Western theological tradition) and the private, individualistic language of existentialism, with its preoccupation with private experience, as well as pietism's penchant for the expression of feelings. He claims that the logical positivists have not adequately discerned the metaphysical aspect of language. He equally attacks the metaphysicians as failing to realize that very often metaphysics is a human construct, an effort of insecure thinkers trying to overcome their anxieties.⁴⁸

Zuurdeeg claimed that the language of conviction has a particular structure which could only be disclosed by a type of "situational analysis," which does not abstract language from the one who is speaking.⁴⁹ Without being reductionist, he descriptively suggests that the language of conviction is grounded within the structures of the personality. The convictional worldview is "a being-related-to the world which involves a person's existential character. . . . It is connected with the deepest layers of personality, i. e., to who we really are."⁵⁰ He sees language and philosophical systems as being informed by "tacit convictional presuppositions," that are related to the "powerful dread of the merely relative."⁵¹ Zuurdeeg contends that the language of philosophy, even a philosophy of religion, is a "muffled cry against the threat of chaos."⁵² "Philosophy is born in a cry."⁵³

Loder adopts Zuurdeeg's language, but goes well beyond him. In the *TTM*, Loder credits Zuurdeeg's *An Analytical Philosophy of Religion*, but his "emphasis is more upon the experience designated by the word than on the placing of conviction as a term in the philosophy of religion."⁵⁴ Zuurdeeg's definition appears far too functional for Loder. However, seeing conviction as an existential response to the deep desires of the self, as having something to do with the structures of the personality, has some affinity with what Loder later suggests.

⁴⁷See Roger L. Shinn's review of Willem F. Zuurdeeg, *An Analytical Philosophy of Religion* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958) in *Theology Today*, 16 (1959): 272-272.

⁴⁸Shinn, p. 272.

⁴⁹Willem F. Zuurdeeg, Foreword by B. A. Gerrish, *Man Before Chaos: Philosophy Is Born in a Cry* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), pp.6.

⁵⁰Willem F. Zuurdeeg, *An Analytical Philosophy of Religion* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958), p. 111 and Chapter 3.

⁵¹Zuurdeeg, *Man Before Chaos*, p. 7.

⁵²Gerrish's comment in *Man Before Chaos*, p. 7.

⁵³This the overall theme of Zuurdeeg's *Man Before Chaos*.

⁵⁴*TTM*, p. 28n.

As we noted briefly in the first chapter, Loder offers a phenomenology of convictional experience as consisting of "three axes: the Convictor, the convicted person, and the endurance through time of the convictional relationship." The word "convict," and its cognates from the Latin *convinco*, implies, "to overcome, to conquer, to refute."⁵⁵ In such an experience, the convicted person "is compelled to reopen the question of reality in light of the presumed nature of the Convictor and the convictional relationship." When this happens, a new reality is offered that could never have been discovered or cognitively achieved on one's own. "The way in which 'convictional experience' discloses reality and calls for new interpretations is the focus" of *The Transforming Moment*. For Loder, the life of the Christian, as "convicted person," inevitably involves a reorientation to reality, because in the Christian experience the self become a subject convicted "by a Spiritual Presence far greater than the subject him- or herself."⁵⁶ What Loder is pushing for is a "conviction beyond reason," without falling into a realm of irrationality.⁵⁷

With Loder's contribution to the *Festschrift* in honor of Paul Lehmann, we begin to the first consideration of the Christian life in terms of conviction. Written within the larger context of his critique of socialization, "The Fashioning of Power: A Christian Perspective on the Life-Style Phenomenon," fleshes out in sharp relief the difference between the person whose Christian faith is primarily understood as a tool to realize personal goals and the Christian whose life is defined not by socially contrived structures, but mediated by the Presence of Christ. Loder was one of the first to identify the terribly destructive drives of achievement-oriented personality, whose aspirations for success at all costs he considered catastrophic for the human spirit and antithetical to the way of Christ. The A-type personality operates from a value system, rooted in the Protestant reformation and deeply embedded in American culture. "It is celebrated and entrenched wherever there is simple self-denial, devotion to duty, and the pious expectation that worldly benefits will come to reward the economically 'righteous' man." Although Americans (and they are not alone in this) celebrate this lifestyle, usually reinforced by the church (both in its theology and practice), it cannot be adopted uncritically. This is because, as Loder explains, "self-destruction (destruction of the self-potential) is the ultimate outcome of a repressive, planned, purposeful existence at the center of achievement-orientation."⁵⁸ The reason why this way of being has the potential of being so deadly is because the "central tendency of the achievement-orientation

⁵⁵*TTM*, p. 6.

⁵⁶*TTM*, pp. 6-7

⁵⁷*TTM*, pp. 6-27.

⁵⁸James E. Loder, "The Fashioning of Power: A Christian Perspective on the Life-Style Phenomenon," Alexander J. McKelway and E. David Willis, editors, *Context of Contemporary Theology: Essays in Honor of Paul Lehmann* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1974), p. 191.

is repressive of a deep human cry for assurance of ascriptive (not achieved) worth. The outcome is aggression, tension, domineering control, and cruelty."⁵⁹ It is most destructive because it "repressively belittles the achiever's latent wish for ascriptive worth, forcing him into self-justifying behavior."⁶⁰ The tendency of socialization systems described in the last chapter thus only reinforces the self-destruction because an individual is searching for identity and inherent worth, instead of worth granted based upon one's ability to function in terms of the way a society deems valuable.

When transposed into the Christian context, these same drives hinder one's ability to hear the gospel and prevent one from venturing out in faith, living a life that will probably be deemed unacceptable by the wider society. When the church "tries to educate the achiever. . . without actually confronting his style of life," it produces extraordinary confusion for the believer. The result is that the "achiever will take only 'appropriate' and therefore probably only 'successful' educational risks, learn the 'winning' answers, interpret them to justify his style and assume - perhaps not erroneously - that the church is celebrating his way of life. It is poignantly evident that if the educational work of the church, from its education of the public to the education of its professionals, cannot deal with the solidarity and pervasiveness of such a style, then it cannot teach in any way which is commensurate with the claims of the gospel it teaches."⁶¹

Loder deplores the way the theological culture of the church (primarily Protestantism) "serves

⁵⁹Loder, p. 191. Cf. the work of one of Loder's doctoral advisors, David C. McClelland, who was a pioneer in understanding the drives of the achievement-oriented personality. *The Achieving Society* (1961), *The Roots of Consciousness* (1962), *Power: The Inner Experience* (1975), and *The Achievement Motive* (1953, with Atkinson, Clark, and Lowell).

⁶⁰Loder, p. 192. "If it fails, it leaves him with nothing but his aggression, tension, domineering tendencies and cruelty. If it succeeds, it creates an environment in which those around him are not only enabled but feel compelled to make the affirmations he has denied himself. This leaves his 'asceticism' unappreciated, and his 'sociological hugs and kisses' may only stand to condemn rather than reward him. (p. 192)"

⁶¹Loder, p. 192. These are the general themes Loder takes up in *Religion and the Public Schools* (New York: Association Press, 1965). I have chosen not to focus on this work because Loder wrote it to reflect the viewpoints of many educators and religious professional addressing these issues in the 1960's. It is not a dependable source for discerning Loder's viewpoints and Loder regretted that it was published under his name (from a conversation with Dana Wright). Loder's personalism, however, comes through in the closing remarks in which he makes the point that "persons are more important than particular doctrines," . . . "The unique worth of the human personality and moral responsibility are the elemental values which pertain respectively to the individual and corporate domains." "Religion is not fundamentally sectarian but fundamentally human. His distrust of institutions is also evident, "Institutions such as the public schools, however vital to society, must be the servants of personal fulfillment, and the agents and arenas of responsible moral action. This principle stands in opposition to the dehumanizing trends in a differentiated and highly industrialized society such as the present-day United States." Finally, "the supreme human fulfillment is spiritual in character, and it is achieved through participation in the devotional activity of the community of the faithful. (pp. 122-125)" For the only review of this volume see John R. Green, *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 59 (1966): 66-67.

to sacralize a distinctively self-destructive pattern."⁶² This is because the Christian experience strikes at the heart of one's personality, changing one's perspective of God, self, world and thus shaping the way a life is lived out. "To speak of the Christian life is not simply to speak of a particular symbol system which may be cast like a sacred canopy over a variety of dynamic patterns. Rather it is to point to a particular alteration of the core structure which changes the total pattern."⁶³ To be a Christian does not mean that one is completely free from the socially-constructed drives which shape identity. However, socially-constructed expectations smother the ability to choose from the strength of the "I." Through conviction one is given "autonomy" over these drives. This is because the "Christian life-style is grounded in a conviction not ultimately reducible to a socially-constructed web of values and behavior."⁶⁴ The believer becomes aware of these drives and increasingly is given the ability to either choose for or against them. Eventually, one comes to see this drive as an addiction. But, as Loder notes, "Christian conviction is more than awareness." It is not simply self-knowledge. The conviction of God, because it involved a psychic change, bestows *freedom* - the freedom to choose for or against self-destruction. Conviction is therefore "the act of God which does not alter achieving potential so much as it restores the freedom to choose for or against achieving. In Christian conversion, the achieving ego does not collapse, but latent patterns such as those demanding achievement lose their compulsive tendency and their power to suppress choice."⁶⁵ Conviction allows for greater freedom of choice.

Loder's understanding of conviction is an incorporation of themes developed in his doctoral dissertation and a further explication of what I see as the relational-personalist influence upon his work. An encounter with God does not result in the annihilation of the ego's drive for achievement. Instead, the Convictor engages the convicted person and extends the freedom to redirect the drives of the ego in a potentially life-affirming way. This leads him to identify "the definitive core of the Christian style [as] conviction," a conviction he structurally defines as an "antithesis-in-synthesis." The formula he uses for this, $+(I/\text{not-}I)+$ will be further expounded and expanded upon in *The Transforming Moment* and later works, becoming one of the principal tenets of his theology. Let us examine this insight.

The formula of conviction represents two parties, an "I" (represented by I) and a Thou (represented by, +). The "I" is the "subjective source of choice" and the "socially constructed patterns which have given shape to the self throughout the individual's history."⁶⁶ Here we come to see Loder's

⁶²Loder, p. 194.

⁶³Loder, p. 194.

⁶⁴Loder, p. 194.

⁶⁵Loder, p. 195.

⁶⁶Such as "the functionally autonomous, achievement-oriented ego" discussed earlier, p. 195.

application of Freudian psychodynamics, specifically the drives of the ego.⁶⁷ The "not-I" speaks to the self-destructive drive of the ego, concealed within ego. It is "the primal sense of . . . absence." The "not-I" is formed by what Loder calls a "reaction formation dynamic." It is the "severe pain of recognizing the unyielding silence and emptiness of 'absence' which seals the individual into whatever personal presence may be available and on whatever terms that presence demands."⁶⁸ It begins at birth and continues throughout the stages of human development. We will explore the psychodynamics more fully later on, but here in this essay we find Loder fleshing how his theory of ego-formation. A child:

. . . has to accept "absence" as the price of his own real presence in the world. But he will accept as little "absence" as possible because from the beginning it is associated with intense pain. This is his condition as an emerging self, an "I." All his choices, by what they negate as well as by what they confirm, serve to remind him that his emerging identity in any form presupposes "absence."

The "I" naturally struggles against "absence" as if it were a mortal enemy. It becomes narcissistic, omnipotent, and omniscient, popular, feared, manipulative, "well-adjusted," "grizzly realistic," etc. in order to fill the "absence" with some fantastic extension of itself.⁶⁹

The I/not-I remains in constant tension and is never resolved.

Loder sees this ego dynamic as a universal human condition, regardless of cultures. He does not attempt to prove this, but relies heavily upon his reading of Freud. Fowler raises the important question, which he does not answer, as to how "universal the radical defensiveness and self-assertiveness of ego as the principle motive of development really is." Does the experience of Freud or Kierkegaard speak for everyone? Did Jesus see human nature in this way?⁷⁰ Loder proceeds based upon the assumption

⁶⁷Freud's early work stressed the "pleasure principle," the libidinal drive of the ego defined primarily by sexuality. Later in his life, Freud reevaluated his theories and identified a deeper drive at work, what he called the "death instinct." He came to call this "a dual drive theory of motivation." There is the drive of the "life instinct," *libido* and the drive of the "death instinct," *destrudo*. See *LS*, p. 21. Loder stresses the theological significance of usually neglected aspects of Freud's death instinct (p. 21). Cf. Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (London: International Psychoanalytic Press, 1922).

⁶⁸Loder, p. 195.

⁶⁹Loder, p. 196. "The 'I' and its extensions are relentlessly pursued by the 'not-I.' This is the binary structure of being and knowing. Speaking of the 'not-I' rather than of absence also stresses a crucial aspect of conviction. Namely, negation is not ultimately prior to being; it exists as Sartre [1905-1980] says 'on the surface of being.' The 'Not-I' is ultimately derivative from the 'I,' but proximately it remains in an incessant tension with the being of the 'I.' (p. 196)"

⁷⁰Fowler & Loder, p. 147. Ajit Prasad, a doctoral student at Princeton Seminary who began his studies under Loder, is writing a Christian education curriculum using Loder's transformational narrative for Christians in India. This pattern is not restricted to Western anthropology. See also Heije Faber's comparison of Joachim Scharfenberg and Horst Kämpfer's *Leben mit Symbolen* and Loder's *TTM*, in which he identifies a difference in understanding religious experience based upon their respective European and American contexts. "Zicht op de structuur van de godsdienstige ervaring: twee boeken," *Nederlands Theologische Tijdschrift* 36 (1982): 311-331.

that the ego drives are universal. But it is important to note that Loder is not trying to reduce the importance of the ego, but to free the ego to choose beyond its defense mechanisms which fundamentally are reactions to absence, or more specifically to death itself as death is universal.⁷¹

Continuing, in conviction "the 'I' stripped of its narcissism, omnipotence, etc., accepts itself as a carrier of 'absence.'" In other words, conviction heightens or deepens one's awareness of the I/not-I tension as constitutive of personal existence where the acceptance of this condition becomes "the very ground of our authenticity as human beings." To live convictionally, "the 'I/not-I' tension is inescapable. Hence, conviction is without illusions."⁷² Thus, it can be said that conviction produces a greater degree of realism.

But this authenticity cannot be achieved through the efforts of the "I," because it cannot constitute itself before the presence of its negation. "The establishment of the priority of being human over against its negation is beyond the power of the 'I.'" Therefore, authenticity is granted in and through the Convictor (+), who brackets and sustains the tension with affirmation and even enables the tension, including the power of negation (not-I), "to choose authentically for oneself and at the same time preserves contingency upon the Convictor for any such choices."⁷³ Grateful for Alfred Whitehead's (1861-1947) observation that "style is the fashioning of power," Loder attests that the Christian style is the fashioning of *God's* power at work in the world, engaged in the work of conviction, "and that by such a convictional structure the Spirit of God is given human formation."⁷⁴

III. The Logic of Conviction and the Grammar of Transformation

In the discussion of Loder's doctoral dissertation in the first chapter, I referred to Herbert Silberer's study of the "hypnagogic vision." We will take this up now. In his research exploring the transformative nature of visions and fantasies, Silberer identified a general pattern in all experiences, a paradigm consisting of a five-step sequence: "Endopsychic conflict; a moment of belief in an 'image;' resolution of the conflict; bestowal of the criterional state of consciousness; anagogic analysis of the

⁷¹Loder relies heavily here upon the writings of Freud's daughter, Anna Freud, *The Ego and The Mechanisms of Defense* (Madison, CT: International Universities Press, 1993). "Defense," as Sigmund Freud defined it in 1894 ("The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence"), is "the ego's struggle against painful or unendurable ideas or affects." In *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926) Freud defined defense as "the general designation for all the techniques which the ego makes use of in conflicts which may lead to a neurosis, . . ." Anna Freud, pp. 42ff.

⁷²Loder, p. 197.

⁷³Loder, p. 197.

⁷⁴Loder, p. 198.

image present."⁷⁵ Although he never quotes Silberer in *TTM*, this sequence serves as the foundation out of which Loder will establish his own hypnagogic paradigm and eventually a "convictional knowing event." Loder develops a way to talk about all forms of knowing that yield new insight and new understandings of reality. In *TTM*, Loder argues that a "logic of transformation" can be identified in all major forms of knowing - scientific knowing, esthetic knowing (as in the arts), therapeutic knowing (as in psychotherapy). The logic "transposes from context to context, generating a multiplicity of personal, social, and cultural expressions." Transformational "knowing events" occur in all expressions of human intellectual endeavor as a counter-force to the process of socialization.⁷⁶ Transformation is thus viewed as "a deep structure of experience that generates a multiplicity of personal, social and cultural expressions."⁷⁷ We will look at the mature expression of this paradigm as seen in *TTM*.

A "knowing event," as Loder calls it, consists of five steps that "intertwines novelty and continuity" and correspond to Silberer's sequence: (1) conflict; (2) an interlude for scanning; (3) constructive act of the imagination; (4) release; (5) interpretation.⁷⁸ Loder was continually searching for the best way to express the five steps in a simple manner. In his inaugural address at Princeton, for example, the sequence is described in this fashion: "(1) a conflict borne with persistence; (2) interlude and scanning; (3) insight felt with intuitive force; (4) release and redirection of the psychic energy bound up with the original conflict; and (5) interpretation which tests the insight for *coherence* with the terms of the conflict and for *correspondence* with the public context of the original context."⁷⁹ In my

⁷⁵*NRC*, p. 5; *RPCF*, pp. 178ff.

⁷⁶Elizabeth Frykberg, "Karl Barth's Theological Anthropology: An Analogical Critique Regarding Gender Relations," *Studies in Reformed Theology and History*, I (1993): 12. This essay is an elaboration of her doctoral dissertation which incorporated some of Loder's ideas. "Spiritual Transformation and the Creation of Humankind in the Image of God, Male and Female: A Study of Karl Barth's Understanding of the '*analogia relationis*' Correlated with Psychosexual and Psychosocial Development Theory," Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, NJ (1989) *TTM*, pp. 44-63.

⁷⁷James E. Loder, "Transformation in Christian Education," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, III (1980): 14. This is Loder's inaugural address to the seminary community upon appointment as the Mary D. Synnott Associate Professor of the Philosophy of Christian Education given in Miller Chapel, 12th December 1979. This structure of transformation "appears in virtually all the major disciplines foundational to Christian education" and serves a methodological rubric to engage in interdisciplinary studies(p. 14).

⁷⁸*TTM2*, pp. 37ff.

⁷⁹Loder, "Transformation in Christian Education," pp. 14-15. Italics in the text. In "Creativity in and beyond Human Development," Gloria Durka & Joanmarie Smith, *Aesthetic Dimensions of Religious Education* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), Loder applies the structure of transformation to an understanding of the creative process. This creative act has five steps, he argues: (1) disturbance of equilibrium; (2) interlude or the scanning of possibilities; (3) the moment of insight; (4) release of energy; (5) summary and interpretation (p. 220).

estimation, the latter overview does a better job of describing the structure of transformation, especially when this pattern is applied to experiences of conviction. Silberer's work provides Loder with a framework to talk about his own convictional experiences discussed in the last chapter. They followed the same general sequence, hence the appeal. Our consideration will be supplemented by an unpublished paper in which Loder further modifies the paradigm.⁸⁰ Let us look at each step.

All knowing events occur within a given context or frame of reference. They are "situated" and "depend initially on assumptions about and within their situations for the meaning of the knowing act."⁸¹ The first step, *conflict*, begins with a "rupture in the knowing context," which questions the assumptive context. It is primarily "a fundamental psychic conflict, engrossing one to the point where his thought cannot escape the boundaries set by some emotional disposition or inclination. . . ."⁸² Before the conflict can be creatively addressed it must be brought to consciousness.⁸³ There are varying degrees of conflict, but "the more one cares about the conflict the more power will be the knowing event." This is because, "In fact," as Loder wisely observes, "one cannot come to know what one does not care about."⁸⁴ The greater the conflict, the greater must it be "bourne with persistence." This requires care and even love to undergo the "rupture" caused by the conflict.⁸⁵

The logic of the sequence pushes one from conflict to an *interlude for scanning*. This is "a moment's hesitation. . . in the effort to sustain the conflict."⁸⁶ The scanning stage was added by Loder after the publication of *RPCF*. After a further analysis of Kierkegaard's stages of faith in which, notes Batson, "reason is frustrated against the Paradox and must relax its hold on consciousness."⁸⁷ In the *TTM*, Loder pulls from Polanyi's work and sees this as a time of "indwelling the conflicted situation with

⁸⁰C. Daniel Batson's doctoral dissertation, "Creativity and Religious Development: Toward a Structural/Functional Psychology of Religion," (Princeton Theological Seminary, 1971), makes use of this paper. The paper was written in 1966 and was at the time (1971) the fullest explication of the paradigm. Batson was Loder's first doctoral student at Princeton.

⁸¹*TTM2*, p. 37.

⁸²Loder paper, p. 7 cited in Batson, p. 89.

⁸³Batson, p. 89.

⁸⁴Here, Loder appears to be drawing from Michael Polanyi's discussion of the essential component of "commitment" required in every individual's attempt to solve a problem. "The structure of commitment, which serves as a logical matrix to the personal, is most clearly exemplified by the act of consciously solving a problem." *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (London: Routledge, & Kegan Paul, 1983), p. 301.

⁸⁵*TTM2*, p. 37.

⁸⁶Loder paper, p. 11 cited in Batson, p. 90.

⁸⁷Cf. *Philosophical Fragments*, Batson, p. 90.

empathy for the problem and its parts." This is a period of both conscious and unconscious searching for a resolution to the conflict, testing ideas and proposing hypotheses. Scanning requires a diversion which comes through a moment of relaxation.¹³⁷ It cannot obsessively focus upon the problem at hand nor can it be forced. Depending on the size of conflict, scanning can take a few seconds or it can take a number of years.¹³⁸ The empathic dimensions of the interlude are important to note because "it takes an investment of caring energy to hold the problem, partial solutions, and the whole state of irresolution together. . . . This is the step of waiting, wondering, following hunches, and exhausting the possibilities."¹³⁹

The third step in a knowing event is the *constructive act of the imagination*. This is the moment of insight or intuition. Here the image, vision, or fantasy "appears on the border between the conscious and the unconscious, usually with convincing force, and conveys in a form readily available to consciousness the essence of the resolution."¹⁴⁰ For a further explication of this step, Loder draws upon Bernard Lonergan's (1904-1985) *Insight*, Harold Rugg's (1886-1960) *Imagination*, Arthur Koestler's (1905-1983) analysis of human creativity in *The Creative Act*. It is Koestler's discussion of "bisociation" that he finds most helpful. The image is an experience of insight, which "contains the elements of the conflict but it represents a resolution to the conflict in a simple, more manageable form; it is an 'easier way to think' the same material that could not be thought in the state of conflict, step one."¹⁴¹ As Loder defines it, "it is two habitually incompatible frames of reference converging, usually

¹³⁷Loder sees this equivalent to an experience of "free association" often used in psychoanalysis, "which attempts to allow one to make 'creative' responses to [one's] personal history through relaxation of the cognitive control of the present." Batson, p. 90.

¹³⁸*TTM2*, p. 37. Such as "when one stares out the window briefly to recall a telephone number or, . . . as when one labors inwardly to resolve piece by piece some of the deep psychological hurts of childhood.(p. 37)"

¹³⁹"It is this step in the forming of the knowing event that leads into the fuller or more comprehensive implications of the conflict and accordingly searches out a solution in the most universal terms (p. 38)." On "indwelling" see Polanyi, pp. 195-202. On the relationship between indwelling and commitment in problem solving see Polanyi, pp. 64, 321.

¹⁴⁰*TTM2*, p. 38. Cf. Susanne Johnson, "Religious Experience as Creative, Revelatory and Transforming Event: The Implications of Intense Christian Experience for the Christian Education Process," p. 21. Doctoral dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary (1983). Loder was her doctoral advisor.

¹⁴¹Loder paper, p. 11-12 cited in Batson, p. 91. See also Carol Lakey Hess' evocative article, "Abomination and Creativity: Shaking the Order of the Cosmos," *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 15 (1994): 28-43, in which she identifies the creativity with moral revulsion within the Jewish and Christian traditions. "The biblical understanding of grace often threatens our understanding of the order of things. (p. 37)" Hess was one of Loder's doctoral students. Her dissertation was "Educating in the Spirit," Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey (1990).

with surprising suddenness, to compose a meaningful unity."¹⁴² It is "the smallest unit necessary to an imaginative resolution and reconstruction of the problematic situation, but on the other hand, its inherent complexity maybe almost infinite."

Theologically, imagination is elevated to an even more prominent place in faith and theological reflection when the Holy Spirit engages the human spirit and establishes new frameworks of meaning. The imagination, while formative and creative, still needs to be guided by the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. It was Kierkegaard who said that "the elder Fichte quite correctly assumed, that even in relation to knowledge, that imagination is the origin of the categories," they derive from the imagination – the *productive Einbildungskraft* (power of the imagination). Kierkegaard claimed "imagination . . . is not a capacity [i. e., faculty], as are the others. . . , it is the capacity *instar omnium* [for all faculties]. When all is said and done, whatever feeling, knowing, and willing a person has depends upon what imagination he has, upon how that person reflects himself - that is, upon imagination."¹⁴³ The time when the Holy Spirit most profoundly acts in the transformation of the human spirit is when the imagination is put at the service of the ongoing working of Christ in the world. Imagination is the creative work of the human spirit that needs to be transformed by the Christomorphic presence of the Holy Spirit.¹⁴⁴

It is important to stress here that Loder makes a distinction between imaginative and imaginary. Resolution comes through an imaginative act and not an imaginary one, because an imaginative act has the power to resolve a problem by reconstructing the way in which a particular context is framed; whereas an imaginary act only leads to further illusion. This is why the "construction of insight [through the imaginative faculties of the knower] sensed with convincing force, that constitutes the turning point of the knowing event. It is by this central act that the elements of the ruptured situation are *transformed*, and a new perception, perspective, or world view is bestowed on the knower."¹⁴⁵ Here, especially we see the creative nature of consciousness.

The reason that consciousness is not merely epiphenomenal is that it is always a creative

¹⁴²See Bernard Lonergan, *Insight* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1970), pp.3ff; Harold Rugg, *Imagination* (New York: Harpers, 1963); Arthur Koestler, *The Creative Act* (New York: Macmillan Press, 1967), pp. 105ff. Cf. Lonergan's framework for understanding creativity in *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972), p. 57. Lonergan provides framework for creativity in which "meaning is embodied or carried in human intersubjectivity, in art, in symbols, in language, and in the lives and deeds of persons. (p. 57)"

¹⁴³Referring to Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814) who emphasized the "productive power of the imagination" in *Grundriss des Eigenthümlichen der Wissenschaftslehre* cited in Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening*, Edited and Translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 175, 30-31.

¹⁴⁴*TKM*, pp. 240-264.

¹⁴⁵*TTM2*, p. 38. Italics in the text.

event. It is new, an intrinsically novel synthesis of the factors which give rise to it and with respect to which it is utterly indigenous. For all its embeddedness in the matrix of experience it is incalculable, immersed in its context yet wholly serendipitous.¹⁴⁶

The fourth step has two dimensions that can be described as *release* and *opening*. First, there is the release of energy bound up in sustaining the conflict. "The release of energy is a response of the unconscious to the resolution and the evidence that one's personal investment in the event has reached a conclusion; the conflict is over."¹⁴⁷ This leads to an experience of opening, "opening of the knower to him- or herself and the contextual situation." It is an awareness of being freed *from* the conflict and freed *for* a sense of self-transcendence. This is the moment of "Aha!" or "My Lord and my God! (John 20:28)" It is the moment of praise, the moment of joy. Without this release and a heightened self-awareness, the resolution is not sufficiently resolved. The unconscious will continue to scan for a resolution.¹⁴⁸ When the resolution comes, new associations will be made with the original conflict not previously noticed, with implications beyond the framework of the original conflict, "thereby immersing the knower more richly and deeply than ever in his or her assumptional world."¹⁴⁹

The freedom gained and experienced in the moment(s) of release and opening does not eliminate conflict. The debilitating effects of the conflict are dealt with, but this leads to another form of conflict that comes with the tension caused between the insight the implications of living out the resolution within a broader context or environment. Resolution is not synonymous with the reduction of tension. Loder's desire is "to emphasize the increased encounter and therefore sustenance of tension (although of a voluntary rather than oppressive sort) to which this process leads."¹⁵⁰

Loder identifies the fifth step as *interpretation*, which entails "the imaginative solution into the behavioral and/or symbolically constructed world of the original context." The interpretation has two movements. Moving backward, Loder calls this congruence, which "makes explicit, congruent connections from the essential structures of the imaginative construct back from the original conditions

¹⁴⁶RPCF, p. 130.

¹⁴⁷TTM2, pp. 38-39.

¹⁴⁸TTM2, p. 39.

¹⁴⁹TTM2, p. 39.

¹⁵⁰Batson, p. 92. We know from Batson's use of the Loder paper that Loder was reading Merleau-Ponty during this period. Loder writes: "Phenomenologically speaking (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*) relative freedom from perceptual distortion minimizes the sense of mystery and doubt which surrounds the dichotomy between a percept and belief in the object perceived; when this mystery – which is persistently baffling – is dissolved, an immensely increased appreciation of "the outer scene" follows together with a new capacity for objectivity. (By "objectivity" I mean that objects are less autistically distorted and therefore a viable corrective to subjective distortion is now operative in the thinking of the subject.)" Loder paper, p. 16 cited in Batson, p. 92.

...” Moving forward is a process of correspondence, which “makes apparent congruence public and a matter of consensus. Thus, the imaginative construct is examined for its correspondence to a consensual view of the world.”¹⁵¹ The image or insight “moves beyond immediacy into verbal symbols and into community.”¹⁵² This is not simply conformity to the wider view of reality. Instead, the imaginative construct provides a better, more accurate way of interpreting reality. Congruence or “coherence” means the resolution is equal to the conflict as rendered by the insight. “Negative insight” results when the insight is a response to an inaccurate understanding of the original conflict. When this occurs the conflict is either dismissed or redefined and the sequence begins all over again.¹⁵³

It is important to note that for Loder, unlike Silberer, that the sequence is synchronic and not diachronic. One can enter into the grammar of transformation at any point. It is not unidirectional or linear. But because the sequence of transformation has a logic and force of its own, once one enters into the pattern the underlying grammar will move towards the resolution of the conflict, “to resolve conflict through the creation of new knowledge.”¹⁵⁴ This is similar, says Loder, to Frank Kermode’s “sense of an ending,” found in the grammar of most narratives.¹⁵⁵ A parallel can be made with music. The ear demands a resolution to the tension contained in a unresolved chord.¹⁵⁶ Anything that appears unfinished demands an ending, and humanity will go to great lengths “to satisfy the urge toward completion.”¹⁵⁷ Whether one enters the sequence before or after a moment of insight, the logic of the grammar will move one through all five steps. One can work either forward or backward along the sequence, with relation to insight.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵¹*TTM2*, p. 39.

¹⁵²*RPCF*, p. 194.

¹⁵³Loder, “Transformation in Christian Education,” p. 15.

¹⁵⁴*TTM2*, p. 41.

¹⁵⁵Frank Kermode, *The Sense of An Ending* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967); *TTM2*, p. 41.

¹⁵⁶Cf. Jeremy S. Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 39ff, 111ff.

¹⁵⁷*TTM2*, p. 41.

¹⁵⁸*TTM2*, 41. “Transformation in Christian Education,” p. 15. Loder notes, for example, that sometimes we have answers before we know what the questions are. This is not intellectual “sloppiness, it was Einstein’s procedure for discovery. He knew intuitively that there was something wrong with the Newtonian world view and that he had the answer somewhere in himself when he first read Newton’s [1642-1727] *Principia Mathematica*. If one enters the process in the middle, transformational grammar would call for one to work backward into the latent conflict resolved by the insight and forward again into interpretation.” Sometimes the conflict can be latent, but an individual searches for the ability to

Earlier, we noted that a knowing event contains both continuity and novelty. Continuity is insured by the internal logic of transformational grammars. Novelty results from "the opposing force of discontinuity," from the "power of a *mediating* image, insight, intuition, or vision."¹⁵⁹ It is the presence of this power, or more correctly this "mystery," Loder suggests, that makes it impossible to reproduce or force the sequence toward its completion. "No matter how one searches with penetrating conscious analyses to make logically tight connections, the insightful resolution to conflict is always a gift that takes awareness by surprise."¹⁶⁰ The mediation is literally a new way that is given from "a realm of reality beyond the consciousness itself." And when the resolution is given, Loder explains, in a way that once again reinforces the relational-personalist themes in this thought, that "self-transcendence . . . springs into being spontaneously like a still heart suddenly resuscitated." By self-transcendence Loder means "conscious of being conscious," an awakening, and in that consciousness one is given the freedom to choose.¹⁶¹ In this sense, the convictional sequence is not neurotic if the result gives one the ability to choose freely for reality as mediated by the image. "The imaginative mediator liberates the "I," impels the knower toward new explorations of his or her world and towards those choices that promises to exercise transcendence and hold open the future. Discontinuity effected by an imaginative construct is the key and center of the knowing event; indeed, it is just this discontinuity that makes transformation possible."¹⁶²

As stated previously, the logic of transformation can be found in all forms of knowing and situations of human existence. Loder claims it is "anchored in the very marrow of existence." But this is not to say, avoiding all reductionisms, that transformations that have a distinctively religious quality

articulate the conflict and seeks its resolution. This is the style of "seekers" or "wonderers." Others still, may awake from a dream feeling refreshed and energized and then be thrown into the sequence to recover, if possible, the dynamics of the dream which addressed the conflict and provided a resolution (p. 15).

¹⁵⁹*TTM2*, p. 41. This insight both echoes and extends Loder's doctoral dissertation. In this way J. Steve Rhodes' contention that "Loder's very emphasis on radical discontinuity seems to be made at the expense of continuity," is a deficient reading of *TTM*. See "Conversion as Crisis and Process: A Comparison of Two Models," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 5 (1986): 21-22. Rhodes fails to appreciate, like Fowler (see below) the power of negation that seeks to undo whatever gains are made by the developing self. Continuity is never denied in Loder's understanding of transformation. His point is that continuity is given by something other than the ego, namely the Holy Spirit who sustains and reforms the human spirit to choose life.

¹⁶⁰*TTM2*, p. 41.

¹⁶¹*TTM2*, p. 41. In a knowing event, "stress is placed on the power of the insight to generate new knowledge from reality beyond the immediate boundaries of consciousness (p. 225)."

¹⁶²*TTM2*, p. 41. The freedom to choose is constitutive of a "criterional consciousness" as we saw in the previous chapter.

are merely the product of transformational patterns built into existence. Instead, Loder claims that "central to the Christian faith is that human transformations must themselves be transformed."¹⁶³ What is more, Loder contends that it is precisely this logic of transformation which resonates most profoundly with the way one experiences the presence of God. The logic of transformation in all forms of human knowing corresponds to the logic of transformation inherent to the Spirit of God. "The *likeness* is established by the logic of transformation."¹⁶⁴ This is not a simple one-to-one relationship. While there is a likeness, there is also a difference because transformational logic is "transposed from one level to the other, making the human spirit conformable to the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit intelligible to the human." However, the difference rests in the fact that "on the human level, the ungrounded self is seen as the origin and destiny of the human spirit, but on the divine level human transformations are transformed and the origin and destiny of the Holy Spirit is the Holy One."¹⁶⁵ This is the basic premise behind what Loder has come to call the *analogis spiritus*. Before moving to a discussion of the divine-human relationship, let us further explore the drives of the human spirit.

IV. The Human Spirit's Drive Toward Meaning

We take up here Loder's understanding of the human spirit. By the human spirit, Loder wants to distance himself from a uniquely expressivist understanding, that is the human spirit conveyed through "arts, music, literature, sculpture, painting, drama, dance, and the like." He wants to be more specific by saying that the human spirit is an *exocentric, self-relationality*. By exocentric, Loder draws from Wolfhart Pannenberg's (b. 1928) use of the phenomenology of Max Scheler (1874-1928). In *Man's Place in Society*, Scheler's phenomenological consideration of humanity, influenced by the personalism of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), led him to believe that what makes humanity unique is its "openness to the world," in that "the spiritual being is . . . no longer subject to its drives and environment."¹⁶⁶ This spirit "transcends what we call 'life' in the most general sense."¹⁶⁷ Loder adapts Pannenberg's use of the word "exocentricity" to describe "human openness to the world and self-transcendence; . . . in this

¹⁶³TTM2, p. 64. "From the standpoint of Christian conviction, all of the preceding transformations [in scientific, esthetic, and therapeutic knowing], transposed from context to context, are forms of knowing that reflect, in respect to the character of each context, that decisive transformation by which we come to know Christ. (p. 64)"

¹⁶⁴TTM2, p. 94. Italics in the text.

¹⁶⁵TTM2, p. 94.

¹⁶⁶Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985), p. 35. See also, *LS*, p. 5.

¹⁶⁷Max Scheler's *Die Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos* (*Man's Place in the Cosmos*, 1928), cited in Pannenberg, p. 36.

one word [Pannenberg] designates human spirit."¹⁶⁸

By self-relationality, I refer to Loder's use of Kierkegaard, but it also points to his reliance upon the research of neurologist, Wilder Penfield. Penfield's studies are used extensively in *The Transforming Moment*, *The Knight's Move* and *The Logic of the Spirit*. In one study, Penfield describes work he did with epileptic patients, placing extremely sensitive electrical probes in the brain during open skull surgery while the patients remained conscious under a local anesthetic.¹⁶⁹ The results of the study helped to locate the functional capacity of various sections of the brain. When Penfield touched a section of the cortex, a patient would move his arm or hear music. But each time the patient would say to Penfield, "You did that. I didn't." Penfield could not "locate the 'I' who said, 'I didn't.'" This led him to the conclusion that there are "two essences." "[O]ne would be the brain, its structures, and programmed patterns of behavior; the other would be the 'I' who had the capacity to enter into the program and 'blaze new trails through the neuronal structure,' create new programs, and redirect previously programmed behavior. This is the source of choice, meaning, and belief."¹⁷⁰ This is not "proof" of a Cartesian dualism, but what Loder calls the "strange loop in the brain," a self-relatedness.

Self-relatedness is a strange loop because the statement of the patient is invariably made in his own language and formulated as a clear idea, recognizable to all who speak his language. That is, it is within a preprogrammed system of language and thought that the transcendence of the "I" appears, and yet it expresses itself as being in some other respect outside that system of language and thought. This meaningful combination of continuity and contradiction makes this a strange loop, which resides at the very core of what we take to be distinctively human: our powers of self-transcendence and self-relatedness in choice, meaning and belief.¹⁷¹

Self-relatedness, combined with the an exocentric openness to the world, endows the human spirit with the capacity to be creative, to compose a world. "Mind, then, is the making of meaning, the creator of objects, concepts, myths."¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸LS, p. 5. It was H. Plessner, *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch* (1928) who preferred the word "exocentricity" to speak of this "openness to the world." Pannenberg, p. 34.

¹⁶⁹TTM, pp. 75-77; TKM, pp. 43-44; LS, p. 5. Cf. Wilder Penfield, *The Mystery of the Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

¹⁷⁰LS, p. 6. Penfield was criticized for establishing this hypothesis. The double-essence theory challenges the prevailing positions of neurological science. Loder values Penfield's study and makes considerable use of it precisely because it is non-reductionistic, questioning the assumption that "all mental processes will be brought under the analysis and description of neurological findings." Loder suggests that since this form of reduction is not viable in quantum mechanics, which is inherently relational, "it is much less likely to be viable for the study of human behavior where subjectivity is the essence of the 'object' investigated just as it is of the investigator himself (TKM, p. 44).

¹⁷¹LS, p. 6.

¹⁷²TTM, p. 76.

Thus, we see that Loder is interested in the way the human spirit is at work in every knowing event, striving for deeper meaning and integrated wholeness. This is the work of the human spirit across the span of one's life. By "meaning," we mean a subjective experience, a "psychological state which can affirm life."¹⁷³ The developmental psychologist, Robert Kegan, sees human being as a:

... meaning-making organism. . . and what a human organism organizes is meaning. Thus it is not that a person makes meaning, as much as that the activity of being a person is the activity of meaning-making. 'Percept without concept is blind,' Kant said. 'Experience is not what happens to you,' Aldous Huxley [1894-1963] said, 'it's what you do with what happens to you.' And the most fundamental thing we do with what happens to us is organize it. We literally make sense. Human being is the composing of meaning, including, of course, the occasional inability to compose meaning, which we often experience as the loss of our own composure.¹⁷⁴

Consciously or unconsciously, the human spirit labors intensely to construct a world of meaning.

Phenomenologically speaking, Loder proposes a constructivist understanding of reality. Reality is a human construction. This point has been made most notably by Alfred North Whitehead, Alfred Schutz (1899-1959), Husserl and Merleau-Ponty (1907-1961), all of whom advance the constructed nature of reality.¹⁷⁵ This is not to say that we can make reality into anything we want it to be. Neither

¹⁷³Edward F. Edinger, *Ego and Archetype: Individuation and the Religious Function of the Psyche* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 108. It does not convey "abstract meaning, at least not primarily, but rather living meaning which, laden with affect, relates us organically to life as a whole. (p. 108)"

¹⁷⁴Robert Kegan, *The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 11

¹⁷⁵Alfred North Whitehead: "Nature gets credit which in truth should be reserved for ourselves, the rose for its scent, the nightingale of his song, and the sun for its radiance. The poets are entirely mistaken. They should address their lyrics to themselves and should turn them into odes of self-congratulations on the excellence of the human mind. Nature is a dull affair, soundless, scentless, colorless, merely the hurrying of material, endlessly, meaninglessly." Cited in C. Daniel Batson; Patricia Schoenrade; W. Larry Ventis, *Religion and the Individual: A Social-Psychological Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 89. Alfred Schutz: "All our knowledge of the world in common-sense as well as in scientific thinking, involves constructs, i. e. - a set of abstractions, generalizations, formalizations, idealizations specific to the respective level of thought organization. Strictly speaking, there are no such things as facts, pure and simple. All facts are from the outset facts selected from a universal context by the activities of our minds. They are, therefore, always interpreted facts, either facts looked at as detached from their context by an artificial abstraction or facts considered in their particular setting. In either case, they carry along their interpretational inner and outer horizon. This does not mean that, in daily life or in science, we are unable to grasp the reality of the world. It just means that we grasp merely certain aspects of it, namely those which are relevant to us either for carrying on our business of living or from the point of view of a body of accepted rules of procedures of thinking called the method of science." Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers*, Volume 1: *The Problem of Social Reality*. (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1962), p. 5. See also Alfred Schutz, *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, Translated by George Walsh and Frederick Lehnert, Introduction by George Walsh (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1967). Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Science and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*. Translation and

does this view suggest that reality is an illusion, that it has no objectivity. The point is that "the meaning that we attach to our experience is what gives it the structure and stability of 'reality.' This meaning is very much a human creation."¹⁷⁶

Among psychologists, the Gestalt school has also advocated this viewpoint. A German word, *Gestalt*, means "form" and refers to the way we form or create experience into meaningful objects and relations. We construct reality based on our cognitive structures. Max Wertheimer (1880-1943) saw the shift from one form to another the source of creative thinking, "the processing of destroying one Gestalt in favor of a better one."¹⁷⁷ This extends the work of Jean Piaget (1896-1980) who analyzed the various ways children think at different stages of development. "Cognitive structures are conceptual dimensions on which we scale our experience; they allow us to compare one experience with another. This ability to classify and differentiate experiences enables us to construct a reality." This means that our cognitive structures are, in the words of Merleau-Ponty, "the framework on which reality is woven."¹⁷⁸ Shifts in gestalts are required in the creative act and in moments of transformation. When new gestalts appear, reality is reorganized. So that creative thought and moments of transformation may be defined "as the process whereby one's cognitive structures are changed toward greater flexibility and adaptability through greater differentiation and integration. With the emergence through creativity of new organizing principles, new realities are born that allow the individual to think constructively about previously insoluble problems. . . ."¹⁷⁹

The compositional drive is similar to what Kierkegaard called the "generative *dunamis*" of the human spirit. Loder observes that this:

Introduction by David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception: And Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics*, ed., trans. James M. Edie (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964).

¹⁷⁶Batson, Schoenrade, Ventis, *Religion and the Individual: A Social-Psychological Perspective*, p. 89.

¹⁷⁷The Gestalt school has its origins in the work of Max Wertheimer's reflections of 1912 on the invention of movies. Still images are projected upon a screen in sequence and rapidity to create the impression that we "see" motion. "He reasoned that if we can so easily construct a movie reality from the experience of a series of still shots, then our power to create reality must be great indeed." Batson, Schoenrade, Ventis, p. 89.

¹⁷⁸Batson, Schoenrade, Ventis, p. 90.

¹⁷⁹Batson, Schoenrade, Ventis, p. 94. They refer to Loder's work only in a footnote. Yet, this definition of creativity is similar to the one he offers in his doctoral dissertation, "a trans-rational or trans-logical imaginal restructuring of one's concept of an existential conflict allowing for increased encounter with one's environment and the conflicts generated by such encounter." This definition builds upon Loder's work with the hypnagogic paradigm in *RPCF*. Batson, "Creativity and Religious Development: Toward a Structural/Functional Psychology of Religion," p. 82.

... dynamic can be characterized as a coherent pattern of knowing which draws into a differentiated whole the many splintered ways we are taught to think. Although this pattern does not emphasize cognitive behavior, its power to shape cognition is familiar to us in acts of creativity and scientific discovery. It is not predominantly a passionate, Dionysian way of knowing, but is profoundly evident in the intuitive and affective ways we know each other in acts of love and compassion. It does not stress either the transcendent self or the immanent self at the expense of the other, but tends to accentuate the dual unity of the self by holding transcendence and immanence together and apart at the same time.

Essential to the spirit's nature is its wind-like quality; it often takes us by surprise and leads us where we would not otherwise go. Its deeper characteristic, however, is its integrity in driving toward meaning and wholeness in every complex and variegated context.¹⁸⁰

The human spirit is at work in all knowing events. It seeks out resolution and explanation. It is concerned for the truth and knows that it finds the truth when it sees it. It knows, that it knows, that it knows. Its determination is relentless. It will work hard, throughout a lifetime, to solve the deepest conflicts engendered by human existence. It will pour *extraordinary* amounts of energy into this task, using every problem solving tool at its disposal, especially reason and logic. When the resolution comes we know it, almost intuitively. We spontaneously respond with shouts of "Eureka" or "Hosanna - verbal expressions of a deeply existential awareness.

But there are limits or restrictions in the human spirit's ability to know. There are times when the human spirit cannot compose a world of meaning, when we are unable to see the image that can reorient reality. As we move away from some of the epistemological arrogance of the eighteenth century, with its trust in the capacity of human reason as the ultimate guide toward truth, we are regaining a renewed sense of the restrictions in all areas of knowledge, and this is especially true for theology. Incorporating the work of Polanyi, Torrance and Kierkegaard, Loder asserts that reason's participation in a knowing event, "unequivocally depends upon the image and its cognates to draw together an integrated picture, to put things in a new perspective, or to construct a new world view."¹⁸¹ However, there comes a time in every knowing event when a "rationalistic eclipse of the image eventually cuts off reason from its substance - indeed, from the truth it seeks to order and communicate." Loder calls this a new theory of error, an "'eikonic eclipse': a theory of error in which rationalistic assumptions about truth cut off reason from its generative sources in personal knowledge and the imagination."¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ *TTM2*, pp. 2-3.

¹⁸¹ *TTM2*, p. 26.

¹⁸² *TTM2*, pp. 27, 223. Torrance, Thomas F. Editor. *Belief in Science and in Christian Life: The Relevance of Michael Polanyi's Thought for Christian Faith and Life* (Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1980); T. Torrance, *The Christian Frame of Mind: Reason, Order, and Openness in Theology and Natural Science*. Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers & Howard, 1989. *Transformation & Convergence*

He explains that "in knowing anything, we respond more subliminally and thus more totally than is fully recognized. 'We know more than we can tell,'" as Polanyi has said.¹⁸³ That is, "objects" encroach upon us in ways we cannot always recognize, and question the result of assumed rational processes. These objects come upon us in experiences that we cannot always articulate in linguistic and conceptual forms. The knower searches for a vocabulary and conceptual framework to "make sense" of what is experienced. In the area of scientific inquiry, Loder emphasizes the point that "theory creates the facts or the presumably indisputable aspects of knowledge." Such theories come as "contradiction forces the subjective mind of the theoretician to explore tacitly held theories, assumptions, and opinions, many of which are vague or beyond the periphery of consciousness. . . ."¹⁸⁴ How the objects of our world get "inside," Loder notes, raises considerable philosophical problems. But drawing upon relational or interactionist perspectives of human development, he recognizes a pattern typical in scientific reasoning.

Infants first indwell the objects of their world, turning them over and over, putting them in their mouths, in their ears, dropping them and so on until they have incorporated the objects or grasped a sense of their totality. What this exploration does physically, they eventually learn to do mentally, turning things over in their minds instead of in their hands. It is on the basis of previous bodily experience that has been internalized that the tacit basis for the more abstract mental operations of intelligence is constructed. A particularly striking and familiar example is that learning to crawl as an infant is fundamental to the coordination and organization of the mental operations involved in later learning to read. This is all to say that subjective involvement is not arbitrary, nor is it a matter of choice. It is inevitable in the knowledge of any and all objects.¹⁸⁵

Loder echoes Polanyi and Torrance who argue that the human knower is involved in what he/she knows.¹⁸⁶ Not that it is a conscious choice, but that it is merely the way we come to know the world.

in the Frame of Knowledge: Explorations in the Interrelations of Scientific and Theological Enterprise (Belfast: Christian Journals, Ltd., 1984).

¹⁸³ *TTM2*, p. 30; M. Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (New York: Doubleday, 1967), p. 4.

¹⁸⁴ *TTM2*, pp. 30-31.

¹⁸⁵ *TTM2*, p. 31. Cf. James Allen, *As a Man Thinketh* (Bountiful, UT: MindArt, 1988), p. 83. "The within is ceaselessly becoming the without." "From the state of a man's heart proceed the conditions of his life; his thoughts blossom into deeds, and his deeds bear the fruitage of character and destiny."

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Polanyi's "personal coefficient" in *Personal Knowledge*. Here, Loder also reflects the thought of John Macmurray (1891-1960) from a more philosophical approach in his identification of action (involvement) toward what is known. The "Self is a *person*, and that personal existence is *constituted* by the relation of persons." *The Self as Agent* (Volume I of *The Form of the Personal*) Introduction by Stanley M. Harrison (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), p. 11-12. "The disinterested pursuit of the truth may be, and, I am convinced, is in fact, a condition of the practical efficacy of reflection. The inner life of the spirit is not merely technological: it is not condemned to a servitude to practical ends which are set for it without its knowledge or consent. The essential reference of theoretical to practical activities does not involve the control of theory by practice. It consists even more significantly in the control of practice by theory; in the determination, through reflection, of the ends of

The objects of our world or our mind are "out there," says Loder, because they are in some "latent sense first 'in here.'"

The implications are clear. "'Objectivity' is not only an impossible goal in knowledge but striving for it may actually be destructive of knowledge." This is the deep danger of the eikonic eclipse. "To bring all that is subjectively entertained or tacitly held out into the presumably lucid light of 'objective knowledge' may dissipate or destroy what is known." What Loder means by this is that contained in any knowing event is a "blind-spot" which requires an imaginative leap.¹⁸⁷ This leap cannot be contained by that which is reasonable. To not make this leap relegates the knower to a limited "world."

Loder is not arguing that complete knowledge is available simply by making such a leap. He is stressing the point that inherent in all knowing there is a gap, a lacuna, or blind-spot, which means we are dependent ultimately upon larger frameworks for knowledge of a higher intelligibility to provide the meaning and integrated wholeness for which we are looking.

Loder puts it this way:

We all have two blind spots, one in each field of vision. Although they go unnoticed in everyday visual life, they are inescapable because they are the points at which the eyeball connects to the optic nerve and so to the brain. Cut that nerve, and the eye is blind.

The analogy between this and the "mind's I" is instructive. In the exercise of reason there is always a self doing the reasoning - but that self is blind, even to self-awareness. The observing self will always elude the attempt at self-observation, but that blind spot is where reason connects to the selfhood or the thinker. Cut that nerve, and reason is blind.

This is not merely an analogy imposed from perception upon reason, but it is indicative of reason's own solution to one of its deepest dilemmas. When in any given frame of knowledge reason reaches its intrinsic limit, not just for this or that problem but *the limit in itself* with respect to its object of investigation, it is not just a matter of too little information or insufficient technology. It is finally because reason has ignored the reasoner. When this is accounted for, then a wider frame of knowing must be conceived which includes both reason and the reasoner in a relationality that is pertinent to the

action (p. 23)."

¹⁸⁷The educational theorist, Parker Palmer, makes a similar point. The search for objective knowledge "puts us in an adversary relationship with each other and our world. We seek knowledge in order to resist chaos, to rearrange reality, or to alter the constructions others have made. We value knowledge that enables us to coerce the world into meeting our needs - no matter how much violence we must do. . . . Objective knowledge has unwittingly fulfilled its root meaning: it has made us adversaries of ourselves." *To Know As We Are Known: A Spirituality of Education* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), p. 23; see also Fergus Kerr, *Theology After Wittgenstein*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), pp. 23-27, 187-190. Loder p. 32. "A rationalistic eclipse of the image [known] not only invites the fallacies implicit in an uncritical reliance on reason, but it also forfeits the truth that may be disclosed, even thrust on us, by an imaginative construct, integration, or vision of things."

field of inquiry.

...

The results of such a reconstruction are not merely a more inclusive understanding of what pertains at the outer boundaries of the field of inquiry, but a much deeper grasp of what was hidden at the center.

[Thus] for epistemology, this observation raises the question, Why does reason have to be pushed to its limits to construct a way of thinking that includes the thinker, when in fact the thinker has been there all along? It cannot be that such an approach is less sound or productive, since, ... just the opposite is true. Why not recognize, in keeping with Michael Polanyi's concept of personal knowledge, that some degree of anthropocentrism is inevitable? Our aim cannot be to eliminate how we are implicated in what we know, but only to make anthropocentrism more inclusive and intelligible and to make knowledge more inclusive of it and its source and ground.¹⁸⁸

Loder provides several examples of this type of thinking. In theoretical physics, Niels Bohr (1885-1962) established a frame of "relationality called 'complementarity' in order to understand quantum phenomena and the limit their behavior imposed on reason." In the area of human nature, Kierkegaard constructed the "Absolute Paradox," a "frame of reference designed to focus decisively the intractable dichotomies of our despairing human nature and its transformation by the leap of faith." In an attempt to explain the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, the "Chalcedonian (451) theologians by faith conceptually constructed the two natures (God and humanity) and one substance (*hypostasis*) creedal formulation." Loder says when "reason encounters its own 'invincible ignorance,' as physicist A. B. Pippard [b. 1920] puts it, it reconstructs the ground of intelligibility in a frame of reference that ultimately must be comprehensive enough to include the knower."¹⁸⁹

We turn now to the knower and the knower's relationship to what is known. We move to the "in here," which becomes known "out there," that is how the self seeks out these larger frames of knowledge and what hinders this process as well. Here we take into account a more inclusive anthropocentrism, in order to understand the person and his/her world.

V. Four-Dimensionality and the Drive Toward Meaning

Here we take up a discussion of Loder's multi-dimensional phenomenology. For those who have engaged Loder's work, it is usually his understanding of convictional knowing that many have found most appealing. However, the transformative narrative of conviction cannot be apprehended without a consideration of Loder's phenomenology. This point has been largely ignored by readers, maybe because his phenomenology, with its discussion of the void at the heart of being, appear far to too

¹⁸⁸TKM, pp. 62-63.

¹⁸⁹TKM, pp. 62.

negative.¹⁹⁰ But this realism is also its strength and belies the wisdom of his vision. By referring to multi-dimensionality as a phenomenology is not a designation that Loder might have used, but I think it is an accurate one, given the influence of Merleau-Ponty on his thought. Loder is not saying that we gain theological truth through a phenomenological investigation of reality, but that through the creative, interacting movements of the human spirit we are shaping the very phenomena we experience and live in, even as the Spirit bestows a new way of experience phenomena in Christ.

At its core humanity participates in being. We cannot think, know, doubt, or deny without presuming that our thinking, knowing, doubting, or denying *is*. "Being" is the "implicit assumption behind everything that is and occurs."¹⁹¹ At its roots, being is vital and constantly increasing itself in life. Taking his cue from the existentialist theology of John Macquarrie (b. 1919), Loder wants to make being the condition on which all beings exist; hence being is that which "lets be." "Letting be" should not be understood laconically, as the mildly depressed motto "Live and let live" suggests; it is, rather, "Let flourish!" It is not difficult to see how this translates into the creative and loving activity of God, once "faith" has recognized that what phenomenological reason calls *being* has revealed itself as God in Christ.¹⁹² To be human means to be open to being itself and this openness takes place within a context.

From this premise, Loder goes on to describe what being entails. He sets up four categories or what he calls dimensions, that human beings encounter and participate in. These are extremely important in grasping Loder's phenomenology because they provide a framework for apprehending the work of the Holy Spirit in human life.

"Being human entails environment, selfhood, the possibility of not being, and the possibility of new being."¹⁹³ These four dimensions of being can be summarized as the lived world, the self, the void, and the Holy. All four are important. To ignore or deny the power and presence of any one or combination would be extremely detrimental to being. Yet, Loder will argue, most knowing events tend to take place in two of these dimensions, particularly the lived world and self, at the exclusion of the void and the Holy, or in three dimensions where the void, the self and world ignore the presence of the Holy. To speak of *convictional* knowing is always an articulation of four-dimensionality. This four-dimensional knowing can only be experienced through the work of the Convictor, namely the Holy

¹⁹⁰F. LeRon Shults makes the same claim in "'One Spirit' with the Lord: Insights from James Loder's Theological Anthropology," *The Princeton Theological Review*, VII (2000): 26.

¹⁹¹*TM2*, p. 67.

¹⁹² John Macquarrie's *Principles of Christian Theology* (New York: Scribner's, 1977). Loder recognizes his indebtedness to Macquarrie, *TM2*, p. 68. Loder spent a year of research at Oxford University in the late 1970's and worked closely with Macquarrie. Macquarrie was one of the first to read the first full manuscript of *The Transforming Moment*. *TTM*, p. ix.

¹⁹³*TM2*, p. 69.

Spirit, working in an analogical relationship with the human spirit's generative *dunamis*, pushing the human spirit toward and granting a deeper framework of meaning that the human spirit could never achieve alone. As Loder defines it, "Convictional knowing, is the patterned process by which the Holy Spirit transforms all transformations of the human spirit. This is a four-dimensional knowing event initiated, mediated, and concluded by Christ."¹⁹⁴ Let us examine the way Loder describes each dimension drawing upon various thinkers.

A. *The Lived World*

The first dimension of being is the environment or lived world. By reference to a "lived world," Loder derived his description of this dimension from the phenomenologist, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, specifically his discussion of *le monde vécu* (the life-world) in *Phénoménologie de la perception* (*Phenomenology of Perception*).¹⁹⁵ For Merleau-Ponty the perceived life-world is the "primary reality," and that "the perceived world comprises relations."¹⁹⁶ While Loder's schema might be derived from Merleau-Ponty, it seems to have more in common with Husserl's discussion of the life-world (*die Lebenswelt*) in *The Crisis of European Science and Transcendental Philosophy*. Merleau-Ponty held to the primacy of lived-world. "The perceived world is the always presupposed foundation of all rationality, all value and all existence."¹⁹⁷ Whereas Husserl viewed the lived-world as constituted by a larger cultural horizon.¹⁹⁸ For Loder, the lived world, "designates the universal human tendency to create and compose the external realities of one's existence - other selves, social and institutional realities, symbolic constructions of culture, and the physical order, including one's body - into a coherent, workable, and livable whole. Since these factors do not spontaneously generate such a

¹⁹⁴ *TTM2*, p. 93. This is the most succinct definition of convictional knowing that Loder provides.

¹⁹⁵ Curiously, Merleau-Ponty was also influenced by the psychoanalytic movement and began his teaching career at the Sorbonne in 1949 where he was appointed the chair of child psychology.

¹⁹⁶ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception: And Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics*, ed., trans. James M. Edie (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 13. That Loder turned to Merleau-Ponty is not surprising given his interest in religious phenomena. Edie suggests that "it was Merleau-Ponty's intention to lay down a solid basis for phenomenological research which would take him forward from the phenomenology of perception to studies on imagination, language, culture, reason, and on aesthetic, ethical, political and even religious experience (p. xv)."

¹⁹⁷ Merleau-Ponty, p. 13.

¹⁹⁸ See M. C. Dillon, *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology*, second edition (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998), p. 87. Dillon says Husserl's understanding of the lived-world was untenable for Merleau-Ponty because "the primordial sociality of the *Lebenswelt* cannot be generated from within the standpoint of the solipsistic sphere of ownness (*Eigensphäre*) of Husserl's transcendental ego (p. 87)."

coherent whole, the self - out of, and in interaction with, its physical, psychological, social and cultural resources - constructs and maintains a world. In the absence or collapse of the horizon of one's world, pathological behavior may result."¹⁹⁹

Before proceeding, we need to be aware of the various ways Loder uses the word, "world." It has three meanings: "world" (in quotations) refers to a particular, live composition; the term world (without quotations) refers to all possible composed "worlds" taken collectively; and World means God's recomposition of the world.²⁰⁰ These designations will be used throughout.

The human being views itself from within a particular world, from within a pre-composed situation. It "has a world" or "belongs to a world," to quote Merleau-Ponty.²⁰¹ A human being is not a disembodied spirit, separated from one's environment, isolated in one's subjectivity. "Embodiment in a composed environment is the first essential dimension of being human."²⁰² As a result, the Christian experience cannot be "spiritualized" at the expense of ignoring the physical.²⁰³ "In the beginning is the body, the only entity we know from the inside and outside simultaneously and spontaneously." It is through our experience of both being a body and having a body that we come to know, and compose the "world." Loder would agree with Merleau-Ponty that "the perceiving mind is an incarnated mind."²⁰⁴ Loder maintains, drawing from his work with the cognitive developmentalist, Jean Piaget, "Nothing is in our "worlds" that is not somehow rooted and grounded in the body."²⁰⁵ Like the changes and moments

¹⁹⁹ *TTM2*, p. 230.

²⁰⁰ *TTM2*, p. 69.

²⁰¹ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception: And Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics*, ed., trans. James M. Edie (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964); Francis Ryan, *The Body as Symbol: Merleau-Ponty & Incarnational Theology* (Washington, D.C.: Corpus Books, 1970); Mary Rose Barral, *The Body in Interpersonal Relations: Merleau-Ponty* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984); See also Gary Gutting, *French Philosophy in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 191.

²⁰² *TTM2*, p. 69.

²⁰³ "In a service of worship," Loder writes, speaking about the Lord's Supper, "we tend to shed the integument of the flesh for the course of events involved and we produce a highly spiritualized version of wholeness which might be considered 'holier than usual.' . . . spiritualized worship leaves the flesh - Christ's and our own - sterile; it makes worship not a celebration but a retreat for ascetics." "Dimensions of Real Presence," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 59(1966): 29.

²⁰⁴ Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, p. 3.

²⁰⁵ Cf. Jean Piaget, *Six Psychological Studies*, trans. Anita Tenzer, intro. David Elkind (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), pp. 8ff. In the 1970's, Loder did postdoctoral work at Piaget's Institut des Sciences de l'Education in Geneva. His connection with Piaget will be discussed briefly later in the chapter.

of our body, this composition of our "worlds" is not fixed. It can appear to shrink (as in psychological depression) or it can appear to expand (as in love). Therefore, to speak of reality is to speak of a provisional, tentative experience. Our perceptions of reality are contingent upon our ability to embrace what is going on internally. What is "out there" - reality - is first composed in the "in here" of the knower. As a result:

... we see that the "worlds" which live in and through us and on which we build our notions of reality are not in themselves fixed entities or established places with immovable boundaries. In fact, the everyday assumption that we are "in here" and the world is a fixed reality "out there" is another instance of the eikonic eclipse, implicitly severing the personality from itself and its environment. Actually we do not know any reality separate from our composition of it; nor could we live in a world that was merely fixed outside us and for which we had no internal, embodied analogue. We compose "worlds" and reflectively set them "out there;" they in turn feed back and "compose" us; but, whether moving out or moving in, what we ordinarily call reality is included in and sustained by our spontaneous competence to compose a "world."²⁰⁶

This makes possible the joy and inherent terror of existence. We can be free to compose new worlds, be creative, and be flexible. Additionally, we also know just how fragile reality can be. This is what occurs in insanity; the human spirit becomes stuck in a world that cannot be recomposed through adaptation and creative reflection.²⁰⁷

Not only do we compose a lived world, we also choose what world that might be. And we compose the world "so as to eliminate the blind spot. We live not in a strictly physical environment but in a "world" our minds compose out of physical input." This final point is key: "The inherent compositional capacity is always at work to create, integrate, equilibrate a "world" that will be livable in terms of the body we have been given."²⁰⁸

B. The Self

Who is doing the composition? The self.²⁰⁹ What is the self? Spirit. Here, Loder relies heavily

²⁰⁶ *TTM2*, p. 72. The "In" and "Out" discussion is also indebted to Merleau-Ponty. See Galen A. Johnson, "Inside and Outside: Ontological Considerations," in Dorothea Olkowski and James Morley, eds. *Merleau-Ponty, Interiority and Exteriority, Psychic Life and the World* (Albany, NY: State University Press of New York, 1999), pp. 25ff.

²⁰⁷ *TTM2*, p. 72. This also occurs when we lose more than seventy-two hours of sleep or prolonged sensory deprivation.

²⁰⁸ *TTM2*, p. 73.

²⁰⁹ In talking about the self, I am fully aware we are treading on slippery ground, particularly in light of recent studies and trends in philosophy. I am thinking particularly of Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Harvard, 1989). An especial danger is the notion that the self is somehow disengaged from itself, and the world around it; an entity unto itself. Neither Loder, nor myself, wish to affirm this. The individual is a self, and has a self, just as, to quote Loder, we are a body

upon Kierkegaard's well-known, even mind-numbing definition of the self in *The Sickness Unto Death*. Because he builds on Kierkegaard's insights it is important to quote the definition:

A human being is spirit. But what is spirit? Spirit is the self. But what is the self? The self is a relation that relates itself to itself or is the relation's relating to itself in the relation; the self is not the relation but is the relation's relating itself to itself. A human being is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity, in short, a synthesis. A synthesis is a relation between two. Considered in this way, a human being is still not a self.

In the relation between two, the relation is the third as a negative unity, and the two relate to the relation and in the relation to the relation; thus under the qualification of the psychical the relation between the psychical and physical is a relation. If, however, the relation relates itself to itself, this relation is the positive third, and this is the self.

Such a relation that relates itself to itself, a self, must either have established itself or have been established by another.²¹⁰

For Loder, as for Kierkegaard, the self:

... is not an entity but a relationship entirely unique in relation to its "worlds." Were it not for the self, it might be correct to say that given the bodily anchorage of the 'lived world,' we know nothing that we have not somehow first experienced through the body. However, the self is one aspect of human being that, although it becomes embodied, is not created through any extension of the body.²¹¹

It has a body and is a body. Yet where is the relationship? The relational element is found in unpacking the "I" of the self. By this, Loder means that the "I" of the self has components. "The culturally embodied 'I', the look of self-reflection, is not the self." That is not the authentic self, although it may look to be. This "self-reflection" has to be "broken open," and exposed for what it is. Very often the culturally embodied self is mistaken for all of the self. The fact that the self has a body allows the self

and have a body. Loder's goal is to show how the self, quoting Kierkegaard, through the mediation of Christ, becomes spirit, or, as Loder would put it, becomes fully oneself. The transformed self, so transformed through convictional knowing, is a self that is embodied, engaged, subjectively involved.

²¹⁰Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 13. Kierkegaard stresses the fluidity of human experience which is related to what Matthew J. Frawley sees as the "inherently dynamic nature of the human spirit" in Kierkegaard's anthropology. "Loder on Kierkegaard," *The Princeton Theological Review*, VIII(2000): 10. Frawley's interpretation of the Danish is particularly insightful. The "English translation of [the] verb 'relate,' *Forholder sig*, is consistent with the tense of the Danish: *present indicative*. By using this tense, Kierkegaard emphasizes that we are *always* relating to ourselves; it is an ongoing activity that is happening right now in you and me. It is not an activity that we begin later in life when ethical issues become important, nor is it an activity that we *should* initiate because we *can*. Rather we are always relating to ourselves, even when we are not aware of this activity. This dynamic activity within us defines us as spirit. We do not at some later point in life *become* "religious," spiritual, or single individuals. We are spirit from the start. (p. 10)" Italics in the text.

²¹¹TTM2, p. 77.

to become composer and creator of new worlds. This is what Loder calls self-relatedness, where the relationship between the two becomes a "positive third term" (again pulling from Kierkegaard).

The identification of this relational aspect of the self is essential, despite the fact that this is not the way we usually think of ourselves. The self-relatedness of the self simultaneously grants the privilege of engaging the world, without being defined by the world. But in order for this to occur, one must choose. As Loder makes clear:

The self as positive relationship - "a relation that relates itself to itself" as Kierkegaard put it - is "conscience" in the generic sense. It is knowing within and together with oneself (scientia and con-). This is the self that has chosen itself and in that choice determined to be itself, in, but not of, its "worlds," in, but not of, its embodiment; "having" but not "being had." This represents a choice against the endless mirrors of self-reflection, against socially constructed selves and the superego, against world-denying mysticism and against absorption in a world of kindly "thous." The self as conscience is generated by the power to choose. One must choose to choose the self, otherwise all choices will be consumed in self-reflection and "world" composition.²¹²

But we cannot maintain or forever choose this relationship with the self. The place where we continue to remain or become authentically self is in the Source of our being, which is what Kierkegaard meant when he said we must be "transparently grounded in the power that posits it."²¹³ "The self is itself when it expresses the nature of being-itself," Loder says, "as that which 'lets be'" or 'lets flourish.'" This is the way of love, and once grounded in the love of the One Who "lets be," the self is free to compose the "world" in a new way, which becomes World. "Thus, the self free to be itself loves the World and so lets it flourish with the same integrity, freedom, and love with which 'I' came into being." This, according to Loder, is "a transformation of the self-reflected self into a self that reflects its groundedness in being-itself."²¹⁴ When the self is transparently grounded in the Power that posits it, then it can be said that the self is spirit. This is why Loder prefers to stress the idea of the human spirit in its relationship with the Holy Spirit. For the relationship is Spirit to spirit, thus allowing a complementary interconnection. Given Loder's emphasis upon the importance of the personal in all knowing, the term "person" could also be substituted for spirit. When a person is grounded in the Power that truly possesses the ability to grant personality to a person, then it can be said that self is truly *person*, *truly spirit* where before he/she was something less and therefore not living as the *imago dei*.²¹⁵ As we shall

²¹²TTM2, p. 79.

²¹³Kierkegaard, p. 14.

²¹⁴TTM2, p. 80.

²¹⁵C. Stephen Evans, *Søren Kierkegaard's Christian Psychology: Insight for Counseling and Pastoral Care* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), p. 48. Evans uses the terms "pre-self" and "self" for the distinction. "...the pre-self is not a self in the decisive sense because it lacks a relation to God. Genuine selfhood requires that I stand before God, accepting the self I am as a gift from God and the self I should become as a task God has set for me." This idea has striking

see, the Personhood of the Holy Spirit connects the human person within the person Jesus Christ. What is important to stress is that the goal is intimacy, whether seen as Spirit/spirit or Person/person. We will be returning to this theme later in the last chapter.

C. *The Void*

The third part of being for Loder is the void. He develops this idea from a reading of Martin Heidegger's (1889-1976), *Being and Time*. Loder is quick to note that any discussion of the "void" is "semantic anomaly," in that it seems to speak "of nothing as if it were presence; nonbeing as if it were being." Here Loder is more helpful than other philosophers and theologians who are currently exploring "limiting" or "boundary" experiences, and encounters with the other.²¹⁶ They depict experiences in which one is brought to the edge of reality, as if one can cross from one area into the next, after point "P," there would be void, a place "East of Eden," as it were. Because it is perceived as being "over there," beyond a particular horizon, because the possible danger lurks at the frontier, the edge of the world, the void takes on characteristics of being kept at a distance. Loder disagrees:

I prefer to speak of void with the implication that nothingness, or negation of being, is not beyond experience; indeed, it is part of the uniqueness of human being that negation is meaningfully included in the composition of our "lived worlds" and in our sense of "self." Many people live not only on the near side of the limit, but in a real sense beyond it as they choose to enact self-destructive patterns of behavior. We will be concerned to describe not only extreme behavior but also the pervasive nature of nothingness in ordinary experience; the implicit aim of conflict, absence, loneliness, and death is void.²¹⁷

parallels with Eberhard Jüngel who makes the point that theologically we are not yet authentically human, we are on the way to becoming human. To think of "humanity eschatologically, . . . opens to each person the possibility of an eschatological self-understanding." But this self-understanding can only be established through a correspondence to God. "Humanity in Correspondence to God," *Theological Essays*, Translated with an Introduction by J. B. Webster (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), p. 124-125ff. A similar argument is made by C. E. Gunton, *Christ and Creation* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1992), pp. 25-36ff.

²¹⁶See Mark C. Taylor, *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); David Tracy describes postmodernity as the "face of the other" in "Theology and the Many Faces of Postmodernity," *Theology Today* VI. 1 (April, 1994): 104-114. See Michael Ignatieff's discussion of the heath in Shakespeare's *King Lear* and *Macbeth*. Ignatieff shows that the heath in England was the "huge expanse of England beyond the reach of enclosing agriculture and the centralizing state, a realm of wild growth and darkness without patrols or police, king's highways or lights. It was the home of escapees from village order, paupers denied a parish settlement, vagrants escaping the oppression of wage labour, masterless men without land or trade of their own, madmen like Tom O'Bedlam, fugitives from justice and old people abandoned or thrown out of their families. This world beyond custom and obligation exerted a deep hold on Shakespeare's imagination." Supporting Loder's point, Ignatieff suggests that "the heath is both a real place and a place in the mind." *The Needs of Strangers: An Essay on Privacy, Solidarity, and the Politics of Being Human*, (London: Penguin, 1985), pp. 40-41.

²¹⁷Loder, p. 81.

Loder suggests that people live in a composed reality, believing that they are keeping the void at a distance. There are others who cannot accept the real presence of the void, and instead of accepting it (which is too painful) act out what the void reveals to themselves in self-destructive behavior. But these are extreme cases. There is a subtle sense of the void that permeates human existence.

The void is most apparent during times of conflict. These times of conflict arise, most notably, when an individual's lived "world" comes under attack or is ruptured by some experience that exposes the presence of the void. According to Loder, the void is unbearable to a self that is not transparently grounded in God. Apart from God, the self seeks to recompose the world, in the presence of the void, by excluding the void, or by denying what the void reveals about the nature of one's existence. The self (through the ego, as we will see) apart from God does whatever it takes to "remove the intrusive threat of nothingness."²¹⁸ We try to explain it away, and compose a world *as if* the threat of nothingness was not present, just as we creatively ignore the blind spot in other knowing experiences.

To compose the world ignoring the void is extremely dangerous for the self, and by extension, for our lives. Yet, that is what the self is doing most of the time. This could, conceivably, be a virtuous task, to keep the enemy at a distance and guard the walls of the city. But the enemy is within.

...we always have difficulty composing out or covering over the nothingness because it is not merely "out there," it is embedded in the very heart of the untransformed self. The deepest sense of absence we have is the separateness of the self from its Source. As "self-reflection," the self reflects nothingness everywhere by making everything depend on the "I" and the lived "world."²¹⁹

Without reflection from the Source, the self quite easily sees the void present in one's "world," and self. Type A personality syndrome, for example, people become achievers to compensate for the nothingness around them and within them. "Achievers desperately try to compose the world so that the inner emptiness is not noticeable, but there is no hiding. . . ."²²⁰

The ungrounded self, composing a world that avoids the void, retreats from the sense of nothingness, and acts out his/her fear upon a world in a manner that affects families, societies, cultures, and history. This is the eikonic eclipse. "We tend to compose it out," says Loder, "as if it were a great blind spot; but after birth, death is the one absolutely unavoidable experience, the one we finally cannot ignore."²²¹ What could be more indicative of the nothingness within creation than the presence of death, and all proximate forms of death? "This is the perfect statistic, one death per person every time in a

²¹⁸Loder, p. 81. Loder provides the café scene in Jean Paul Sartre's, *Being and Nothingness* as a good example of this type of experience.

²¹⁹*TTM2*, p. 81.

²²⁰*TTM2*, p. 82.

²²¹*TTM2*, pp. 84-85.

material universe that is ultimately destined to silence."²²² But even death is a symbol, a concept we use to either think about or avoid the sense of nothingness.

...death is not ultimate. It too is a metaphor supplied by the end of life to suggest dissolution of existence into absolutely empty silence. Void is the ultimate end of creation and as such it is, ironically, the "goal" of evil. Not every absence is evil, as for instance the absence of pain; but every absence that reflects the inherent brokenness in the self, aggravating the disability of the self to be spirit, evokes evil. All evil presses toward the reversal of God's creative action; God created everything out of nothing, but evil seeks to return everything to nothing.²²³

In this age of "mass-death," as Edith Wyschogrod has termed it, it is evident that the void has considerable sway over human existence. According to Wyschogrod, it is worse for our era. The potential of nuclear annihilation is "pure void." "Contemporary man-made mass death," she argues, "has come into being, in which a death-world, a sphere of life in which the living are forced to exist as if already dead, has been created. The death-world reflects the attempt of technological society, which is alienated from the life-world, the embedding matrix of all praxes, to repair the broken cosmos by an act of radically remythologizing: death becomes the ultimate meaning of the totality."²²⁴

D. The Holy

The Holy does not allow the void to have the last word. All is not vanity, to contradict the Preacher in Ecclesiastes (1:14). Even though the goal of the void might be evil, there is another part of being at work in us, and within the universe, that has as its goal the complete overturning of all that leads to human self-destruction and annihilation. Because this is perceived as a part of being, humanity continues to persevere. "We continue to live," Loder believes, "precisely because in the center of the self, for all its potential perversity, we experience again and again the reversal of those influences that invite despair and drive toward void. Kierkegaard repeatedly insisted with bewildering brilliance that the faces of the void become the faces of God."²²⁵

²²² *TTM2*, p. 84.

²²³ *TTM2*, p. 83.

²²⁴ *Spirit in Ashes: Hegel, Heidegger, and Man-Made Mass Death*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 34. Cf. Wyschogrod's discussion of the Enlightenment as an example of Loder's eikonic eclipse. "The philosophy of the Enlightenment, like science itself, loses sight of the immediacy of the life-world. It "forgets" the life-world as the locus of pretheoretical fullness and validates only the constructed, theoretical, and mediated aspect of sociological existence, which derives from it (p. 24).

²²⁵ "It is the transition from God the void to God the enemy and from God the enemy to God the companion." A. N. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (New York: Macmillan, 1927), pp. 16-17, cited in Loder, p. 85. This is not to say that the void *is* God but that the void is taken up into God by Christ's confrontation with death in such a way that its power is negated.

Loder affirms that God, or the Holy, is at work in the lives of people. Even though the term *Qadosh*, or holy means "separate," Loder still believes the Holy is engaged in peoples' lives without giving up separateness. The experience of the Holy allows him to overcome transcendence/immanence understandings of our experience of God. Many theologians have come down on one side or the other in this debate, offering systems or views that are not satisfying, in my view, because they have very little correspondence to the way we actually experience reality and experience the Holy.²²⁶ Like Kierkegaard, Loder prefers the way of greatest resistance, of living within the tension and finding truth there, instead of seeking quick, simplistic resolutions. So that when Loder speaks of the Holy, "there is no compromise of that separateness in saying that in the midst of the deepest extremity a sense of the Holy *in* us cries out for a manifestation of the Holy *beyond* us. This describes the quality of the Presence of the Holy as that which is indeed separate but not unknowable; rather, it is separate and remaking us in its image."²²⁷

The primary work of the Holy is creative and transformational. When the Holy encounters the self, the Holy will seek the transformation of the self in such a way that incorporates the void into the composition of the World, without allowing the void to utterly destroy the self. One could say the Holy is a realist whose paramount desire is to compose our world four-dimensionally. When this occurs we can affirm the Holy in the face of the void, instead of falling prey to the demonic in a three-dimensional world (world, self, void) where the void is definitive of human life, or belief in a god that looks like God, composed from within a two-dimensional world that ignores the void, and thus recreating God in one's own image (which is an immanentist approach to God - God defined by the predetermined theories about God established by the norms of world and self). Alternatively, and this is key, the Holy *affirms* the self and allows it to thrive in the life of the Spirit. For Loder, "the Holy is the manifest Presence of being-itself transforming and restoring human being." Loder's speaks of the Holy in this way:

The Divine Companion or the Presence of the Holy remains Other, even though its faces appear in human experience. Under its influence, the self becomes truly itself for the first time, and its "worlds" are recomposed in new ways. Subsequent experience is drawn into forms of awareness and behavior that include but go beyond two-dimensional humanity and scandalize the pessimism of three-dimensional existentialism by positive recognition of void as essential to human transformation. The three-dimensional view will say, "It is too good to be true," implying the tautology that three-dimensional pessimism is the truth, so it could not be overcome by two-dimensional good. But tautology can be played both ways: suppose we shift the tautology and say the Holy is the truth. Then such behavior is so true, so filled with the Holy, that it is

²²⁶See Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olsen, *Twentieth Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age*, (IVP, 1992). They see the history of theology since the Enlightenment oscillating between theologies of immanence and transcendence.

²²⁷*TTM2*, p. 86. Loder came to this insight from personal experience. He talks about his painful bout with depression, despair and loss of faith after his father's death, a time when he encountered the void, but also in the void, the Holy: separate, beyond the reach of the void, yet thoroughly redemptive, the immanent sense of the Holy constituted the fourth dimension of his being (p. 88).

beyond good and evil as defined in two- or three-dimensional terms. Genuine forgiveness, inner courage, and sacrificial love are all too true to be "good" in any ordinary and pessimistic existentialist sense. Such scandalous claims point beyond everyday humanity to a quality implicit in being itself that is both awesome and magnetic. The "*mysterium tremendum fascinans*" manifest in the earthiness of human existence via the faces of new being retains Otherness and inflicts profound ambivalence. The experiential mark of the Presence of the Holy is just this ambivalence that both draws and repels us, excites and overcomes us, intrigues and threatens us.²²⁸

We can see now why Loder defines convictional knowing as the "patterned process by which the Holy Spirit transforms all transformations of the human spirit." And we can see how this involves the four dimensions of being. The definition of convictional knowing concludes as follows: initiated, mediated, and concluded by Christ.²²⁹ Loder believes that when the Holy engages the self and establishing a four-dimensional experience of being (through a convictional experience) the ego is released from its self-defensive, self-destructive inwardness and freed to ground itself in someone other than itself. Or more correctly, the self is grounded in the power of the Holy that posits and constitutes the self, thereby allowing the self to look out beyond itself to the world and God in love. In order for this to take place the ego must be transformed. How Christ engages the ego is also another area that Loder has explored in *TTM*, *TKM*, and *LS*. Before we explore his ego phenomenology, it will be important to identify the influences upon his psychological approach.

VI. The Interactionist Tradition

In the *LS*, Loder acknowledges the leading psychological theorists who have shaped his understanding of human development, thus placing himself in the "interactionist" tradition. This acknowledgment further reinforces the relational-personalist themes that have permeated our exploration of Loder's thought. The relational interactionist approach is not something new that emerges with *LS*; it is the same methodology that stands behind *TTM*, the *TKM*. "Normal human development is an emergent reality, a resultant of the interaction between a personality and its environment. The interaction gives the developmental potential of the personality particular and varied shape over the course of a lifetime."²³⁰ Development occurs in stages and "those stages tend to advance according to the principle that they manage increasing complexity with greater simplicity and efficiency in the use of energy."²³¹

²²⁸*TTM2*, p. 89. See also the Epilogue in *The Transforming Moment*, p. 211f. Mention of the *mysterium tremendum fascinans* refers to Rudolf Otto's (1869-1937) study of numinous experiences in *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational* (1917), Translated by John W. Harvey (London: Oxford University Press, 1958).

²²⁹*TTM2*, p. 93.

²³⁰*LS*, p. 18.

²³¹*LS*, p. 18.

Here Loder alludes to the Freudian view that the psyche is compared to that of a steam engine, a force of extraordinary power and energy that produces pressure that needs to be controlled and regulated by the ego and the Super Ego (or Ego Ideal).²³²

By adopting an interactionist approach, Loder thereby excludes other theories of human development, namely preformationism, predeterminism, and environmentalism. Briefly, preformationism refers to the idea of Anton van Leeuwenhoek (1623-1723) who when looking at spermatozoa through the microscope (he was the inventor of the microscope) believed he saw "miniature human figures, who simply had to expand, in balloon fashion, to produce human beings." Preformationists believe that development is simply expansion.²³³ Predeterminism is associated with the American child psychologist, Granville Stanley Hall (1844-1924) who advocated a kind of "developmental Darwinism." Every human being has "preprogrammed" developmental forms that emerge through life as part of the history of the species. Hall's thesis was, "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny." Loder rejects this view because it does not take into account human uniqueness.²³⁴ Environmentalism pertains to behaviorist approaches as seen in John Broadus Watson (1878-1958) and Burrhus Frederic Skinner (1904-1990) who go to the opposite extreme by say that human development can be controlled by one's environment, "that by controlled training, any new born child can be molded into any type of adult."²³⁵ The same techniques used to form the behavior of mice cannot be applied to human beings, again because the self has the potential to compose and create and even choose how one interacts with one's environment. Human "development [is] an emergent resultant of interaction between the person and her environment, with that interaction giving rise and shape to structural potentials within the personality."²³⁶

Loder places the leading interactionists that he admires into three groups. For an understanding

²³²Freud,

²³³Whenever a child is naively thought of as a little adult ("Remember you are a young lady," or "Act like a little man") this is an expression of preformationism. *LS*, p. 19.

²³⁴G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence: Its Psychology, and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education* (New York: Appleton Publishers, 1908) cited in *LS*, 19.

"In this error, phylogenetic history becomes not a contributor to our understanding of human development (which it most certainly is), but an exhaustive account of human development. We are, in fact, born much less adequately programmed for our environment than any other creature, but we have a large mass of cerebral cortex, which is designed to enable us to create and compose our own environment, especially culture(*LS*, p. 19)."

²³⁵*LS*, p. 19. Cf. J. B. Watson, *Behaviorism* (London: Kegan & Paul, 1925) and B. F. Skinner, *Science and Human Behavior* (New York: Macmillan, 1953).

²³⁶*LS*, pp. 19-20. Loder notes that Noam Chomsky's (b. 1928) study of the structure of language completely refuted Skinner ideas. See Noam Chomsky in J. Fodor and J. Katz, *The Structure of Language* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1964), chapter 21.

of the personal unconscious and ego development, he turned to Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), Anna Freud (1896-1982), and Erik Erikson (1902-1994). The second group of theorists are devoted to the conscious mind and cognitive development, Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg (1927-1987), Carol Gilligan, and the structuralist tradition. And the third area centers around a consideration of the collective unconscious, associated with the work of Carl G. Jung and Ann Ulanov and the collective unconscious. Although Loder establishes these categories in *LS*, all of these theorists informed Loder's thinking (especially Freud) from the late 1950's. He turns to these theorists because all of them contribute to an understanding of the human spirit that "both transcends and implements the life of the psyche."²³⁷ He also relies on them not because they are authoritative for the Christian life, but because these are the theorists who have created the field of human development and to whom the theologian must be both cognizant and conversant in order to speak a redeeming word to a wider public about human nature.

Before we proceed we need to grasp the way Loder has come to view the ego and its development. His approach is primarily a fusion of Freud, Erikson, and Piaget. For Freud there are three realities which Loder defines as "intrapsychic, the extrapsychic public reality, and the reality principle by which the intrapsychic life is balanced against external reality, and so provides the rule of the ego." The ego thus mediates reality and therefore has extraordinary power. "The ego is the intrapsychic agency that emerges as the governor of the interaction between the person and the environment, and the rule of the ego, the reality principle, is designed to maximize satisfaction and ensure survival."²³⁸ The ego manifests its work in both consciousness and unconsciousness. In the development of psychoanalysis, Freud concentrated more on the unconscious. Neo-Freudians, like Erik Erikson, have concentrated on the work of the ego and its development. Instead of looking at "the dynamics of the unconscious and the pathological twists and turns of libidinal energy, Erikson concentrated more on the ego as having a structural and developmental potential of its own."²³⁹ The Neo-Freudian turn to the study of the ego as it interacts with its environment informed the object-relations theory of D. W. Winnicott (1896-1971) in the United Kingdom or interpersonal-relations theory, as it is called in the United States.²⁴⁰ In his review of *TTM*, Robert C. Fuller suggests that Loder's discussion

²³⁷*LS*, p. 20.

²³⁸*LS*, p. 22.

²³⁹*LS*, p. 23.

²⁴⁰Harry Gunting, *Psychoanalytic Theory, Therapy and the Self* (New York: Basic Books, 1971), p. 124.

of transformation has less to do with ego psychology than it has with objection relations theory.²⁴¹ This is an incorrect assessment, precisely because Loder's understanding of transformation is more than just the modification of the self when encountered by another, as suggested by Winnicott. Transformation is a psychic change that occurs within the ego when it encounters the holiness of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Loder makes extensive use of Erikson, but will not allow him to have the last word on human development.

Erikson's theories of human development have become the established, almost sacrosanct, position of developmentalists.²⁴² He sets up eight stages of the life cycle and in each stage there is "developmental clock in the organism and . . . in the psyche."²⁴³ Freud focused on development up to adolescence; Erikson extended the pattern through the rest of life. Generally speaking, these are demarcated as infancy (birth-2), toddler (2-3), oedipal child (3-5), school-age child (6-10), adolescence (11-18), young adulthood (19-35), middle years (36-65), and later years (65+). We will not discuss each of these stages in detail, but each period witnesses an intense struggle of the ego to achieve certain "virtues," as Erikson calls them, the fulfillment of specific developmental tasks (such as trust or mistrust in the infancy stage). Each stage is marked by conflict and immense energy as the self tries to make sense of its world. Development occurs under the surface, but when the conditions are right, each stage emerges throughout life. Loder adopts Erikson's stages as a reasonable way to understanding the development of the human spirit.

Within the domain of cognitive development, Loder relies heavily upon the work of the structuralist, Jean Piaget. Even though Piaget taught psychology at the University of Geneva, he wanted to be known as an epistemologist; as such he wanted to understand the structure of the mind. Piaget saw the mind interacting with the environment and out of this interaction, Loder writes, "the innate structural component of the psyche produced intelligence, language, moral judgment, and imagery, to mention a few registers of behavior."²⁴⁴ According to Piaget human development is understood as an "activity directed toward equilibrium" that moves through stages, so that development is seen as "a progressive

²⁴¹Robert C. Fuller, *Zygon*, 18(1983): 464. As Bregman correctly notes in her review, "For Loder, the real problem with the faith development model is that it is not about faith or only incidentally about faith. It is about ego development, . . . (p. 690)"

²⁴²See Erik Erikson *Childhood and Society*, Second Edition. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1963.); *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1968); *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1962).

²⁴³Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, Second edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1963).

²⁴⁴LS, p. 24.

equilibration from a lesser to a higher state of equilibrium."²⁴⁵ Transition from one stage to another in cognitive development is driven by the desire for equilibrium in the face of disequilibrium.²⁴⁶ A sense of disequilibrium establishes a need which one seeks to have met. But intelligence is also driven by a deeper, burning need for transcendence and the "assimilation" of that knowledge into the equilibrium of the self. This is similar to the earlier discussion of Pannenberg's notion of "exocentricity." At each level of development, Piaget sees the mind fulfilling the same "function," as he put it, "which is to incorporate the universe to itself." Through a process of assimilation and adaptation the mind relates to the external world and incorporates the world into itself, so that "mental development appears to be simply an ever more precise adaptation to reality."²⁴⁷ Of particular interest to Loder is a shift that took place in Piaget's thinking before he died. In addition to the developmental structure of human intelligence by way of adaptation, he also came to account for the possibility of transformation to occur from beyond the structures.²⁴⁸

Loder's attitude towards Jung is more measured. In the *LS*, Loder incorporates Jungian archetypes in his discussion of human development during the middle years of life, when individuation (Jung's terms for the emergence and establishment of a completely integrated personality) can begin to

²⁴⁵Piaget, *Six Psychological Studies*, p. 3.

²⁴⁶Although Piaget's six stages will not preoccupy us here, he summarizes them as follows: "1. The reflexive or hereditary stage, at which the first instinctual nutritional drives and the first emotions appear; 2. The stage of the first motor habits and of the first organized percepts, as well as of the first differentiated emotions; 3. The stage of sensorimotor or practical intelligence (prior to language), of elementary affective organization, and of the first external affective fixations. These first three stages constitute the infancy period - from birth till the age of one and a half to two years - i. e., the period prior to the development of language and thought as such; 4. The stage of intuitive intelligence, of spontaneous interpersonal feelings, and of social relationships in which the child is subordinate to the adult (ages two to seven years, or "early childhood"); 5. The stage of concrete intellectual operations (the beginning of logic) and of moral and social feelings of cooperation (ages seven to eleven or twelve, or "middle childhood"); 6. The stage of abstract intellectual operations, of the formation of the personality, and of affective and intellectual entry into the society of adults (adolescence)." *Six Psychological Studies*, pp. 5-6. See also Piaget's *The Construction of Reality in the Child*, trans. Margaret Cook (New York: Basic Books, 1954), pp. 3-96.

²⁴⁷Piaget, p. 8. See Pannenberg's use of Piaget in *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, pp. 346ff.

²⁴⁸This is established in Piaget's late work (with Rolando Garcia), *Psychogenesis and the History of Science*, trans. Helga Feider (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), *LS*, p. 26. Loder also points to Fernando Vidal, *Piaget Before Piaget* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), an account of Piaget's life up to 1918 which relates Piaget's commitment to Christianity and had an intense conversion experience when he was a university student. During the Great War he was reading philosophy and theology with the hope of becoming either a philosopher or a theologian. In an early work, "The Mission of the Idea," Piaget saw the possibility of a renewal of Christianity from the destruction experienced during the war. He also engaged in an interdisciplinary study of science, philosophy and faith. *LS*, p. 25.

be realized.²⁴⁹ In *TTM*, he sees in Jung a pattern of transformation that is mediated by an archetypal form that resides in the collective unconscious.²⁵⁰ Of all the theorists, it is Jung who was most accepting of religious experience. Individuation is a religious process. Religious systems and symbols can aid in the process of individuation, but they cannot realize the transformation of the ego because they originate in the rich symbolic structure of the unconscious. All religions have resources within them that will enable great self-discovery, but this does not constitute transformation. Loder cautions against an uncritical adoption of Jungian thought into a Christian framework for two reasons. The goal of integration of the personality is a static state, of balance between opposites within the self (male-female, good-evil, divinity-humanity). Individuation is a stagnant structure. Loder sees the Christian life as containing a more dynamic experience. Second, Jung sees Jesus Christ as a symbol of the self. This confuses the order of being and knowing, says Loder. "There is nothing in Jung that finally answers the question of ultimate truth, hence there is nothing in his understanding of Christ to prevent Jung from assuming that he, his self, is the answer. Here it is all important that the truth not get confused with a structure for knowing it." Loder wants to reverse Jung's order. This is a very significant observation to stress. "Reversing Jung's priorities and asserting the ultimacy of Christ with respect to the archetypes of the self is not just theological dialectics. It is a crucial matter whether one coming under the power of an ego-transforming process will be able to continue that process in love for Christ's World or will be arrested in an archetypal structure of personal wholeness."²⁵¹

Here, we are reminded that what is most important for Loder is ego-transformation. This is another way of talking about the human experience. To be in Christ is to participate in a new creation, a new state of being. To encounter Christ, to be convicted means to have the energy of the ego refocused or redirected so that instead of turning inward, the ego is free in Christ to turn outward to the world in sacrificial love. Loder wants to draw our attention to those forces that confound and hinder this transformation and we can see this most clearly in his theological reflection upon the drives of the ego along the stages of development. The interactionist methodology clearly will be evident. Thus we turn to a further explication of his phenomenology which will lead to a consideration of his pneumatology.

VII. The Primal Experience and the Search for the Face

At the center of Loder's relational phenomenological pneumatology is a study of early primal experiences of the self and the way these experiences set the pattern for *all* other human experiences and

²⁴⁹*LS*, pp. 292ff.

²⁵⁰*TTM2*, pp. 135ff.

²⁵¹*TTM2*, p. 138. "That is, if Christ is a symbol of the self, then self structures will define Christ (Jung), but if the self is a symbol of Christ, then Christ will define the nature of the self. (p. 139)"

encounters. That primal, originating experience is the face-to-face encounter between an infant (approximately three months old) and his/her primary caretaker. The responses and conclusions drawn from this early encounter delimits an individual's outlook upon the world, self, other, and even God. This is not a deterministic viewpoint. Instead, drawing upon his background in development psychology, Loder offers a theological evaluation of the process of development that is unique in the field of practical theology.

As we move forward, it is important to keep in mind Loder's undergirding principle regarding developmental psychology. To a considerable degree Loder is a structuralist. From Freud, Erikson, Piaget, and to an extent Parsons' notion of socialization, Loder concedes that there is a structure through which the ego develops. The structure of the ego, however, is not constitutive of the human spirit and it cannot account for faith. The "ego may be seen as a kind of tragic hero or a truth-producing error since it brings all the subject's competencies into a working unit, but cannot itself suffice as the center of that integration."²⁵² Faith development, therefore, cannot be viewed as simply a component of human development. This is because "faith is not fundamentally a developmental phenomenon. If faith is a human response to God's grace, it must be rooted in God and be grounded deeper in psychic bedrock than the developing ego's foundation in a favorable balance of trust over mistrust, all of which is primarily dependent on interaction with a human environment." Loder is emphatic about making this distinction.²⁵³

Therefore, it must be stressed that one cannot begin to fathom Loder's theology without a firm grasp of this fundamental point: "Something is inherently wrong with so-called human development. Normal development is psychologically constructed, socially supported, and culturally maintained so that people are drawn out of the full four dimensions of their being."²⁵⁴ The normalcy of that development is established and supported by the dynamics of ego which *restrict* four-dimensional existence. For Loder, the ego's drive is exhibited in "the power of fashioning," where an individual has fashioned a "world" wherein it exists in "well-adjusted, socially acceptable patterns of self-

²⁵²James E. Loder, "Negation and Transformation: A Study in Theology and Human Development," Christianne Brusselmans, ed. *Toward Moral and Religious Maturity: The First International Conference on Moral and Religious Development* (Morristown, NJ: Silver Burdett Co., 1980), p. 178.

²⁵³LS, p. 31. This is also the claim made in *TTM*. The publication of *TTM* was also viewed as direct attack upon the faith development theories of James Fowler (*Stages of Faith*). Loder is extremely critical of Fowler because he falsely assumes human development, as outlined by Erikson and others, as normative for theological understandings of the self. We will pick up this discussion in the last chapter.

²⁵⁴*TTM2*, p. 157.

destruction."²⁵⁵ That normal way of being is basically a process of socialization and maladaptive responses of the ego in the face of the void and its proximate expressions, especially death, loss, and annihilation. So-called human development is "preeminently two-dimensional, aiming at the comparatively meager values of survival and satisfaction as determined by socially accepted norms."²⁵⁶ The restriction begins early in life and accumulates power and intensity as the self moves through the "normal" stages of development, following socially established patterns. The ultimate restriction of the adaptive ego is death itself. To see how this begins we turn to the first three months of life.

The "prototype of religious experience," evident at three months, "sets up in subsequent human life a cosmic loneliness." Loder argues that "human development beyond this period may be understood as a series of circumnambulations expressing this longing and implicitly searching for a transcendent centering of the personality."²⁵⁷ Understanding the source of this existential loneliness will show why it is so difficult to appease. Human birth is a "birth trauma." It is trauma because in the natural, normal process of birth an infant comes close to suffocation, which Loder suggests, is "the primal existential negation." It is the first experience we have of potential annihilation and non-being.²⁵⁸ "This experience of negation ramifies through the whole organism and lays down the foundation for interpreting subsequent experiences of negation. If this psychoanalytic type of assertion is correct, then, ontogenetically, existential negation precedes all other form of negation for the newborn child."²⁵⁹ The child quickly searches for order, searching for a "postnatal equilibrium" in the "random uncertainty of the postnatal world." A child does this by sucking, grasping, focusing, and other adaptive responses.²⁶⁰ But, it should be noted, "the solution to the fundamental *existential* negation experienced by the child

²⁵⁵Loder, "The Fashioning of Power: A Christian Perspective on the Life-Style Phenomenon," p. 187.

²⁵⁶*TTM2*, pp. 157-158.

²⁵⁷*TTM2*, p. 161.

²⁵⁸The fundamental assumption of developmental psychologists, it should be noted, is that the infant is not lacking in what John Locke (1632-1704) referred to in "The Essay Concerning Human Understanding," (1689) as innate ideas. The self is not a *tabula rasa* upon which is written experiences, values, beliefs. The newborn infant is a unique self - a person - encountering, engaging, *feeling* the world at a primal, intuitive level and drawing conclusions about the nature of one's environment.

²⁵⁹*TTM2*, p. 162.

²⁶⁰*TTM2*, p. 162. These are the observations of Piaget. ". . .the infant assimilates a part of his universe to his sucking to the degree that his initial behavior can be described by saying that for him the world is essentially a thing to be sucked. In short order, this same universe will also become a thing to be looked at, to listen to, and, as soon as his own movements allow, to shake." *Six Psychological Studies*, p. 10.

cannot be met by any emerging *functional* competencies."²⁶¹ This is an exceedingly important insight, as we will see later on. Here begins an individual's blessed rage for order and the search for control in the face of the inherent uncertainty and unpredictability of human life.

The child searches for order and the primary organizer of the personality is what René Spitz calls "facial mirroring." Spitz has observed that the search for the centering of the personality goes through four particular phases. The first is an oral stage in which the mouth is the primary means through which a child incorporates the world into himself. He is not alone in this observation. But Spitz notes a shift toward a particular love object, a particular person.²⁶² "The standard indication of this focus (some even say 'imprint') of the child on people is that at three months he or she seeks and learns to respond to the presence of a human face - even a schematic design of a face will do - and give a smile." This is a marked, noticeable and significant "shift from a physiological center to an interpersonal one."²⁶³

The face is the primary object and image through which the personality is ordered.²⁶⁴ "The face . . . is the personal center that is innately sought by a child and the focus of the earliest sense of one's humanity. The smiling response focuses primal wholeness."²⁶⁵ Loder's emphasis upon facial mirroring

²⁶¹ *TTM2*, p. 162.

²⁶² This interpersonal, relational pattern has been identified also by D. W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (New York: Basic Books, 1971); A. Rizzuto, *The Birth of the Living God: A Psychoanalytic Study* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1979); R. Spitz, *No and Yes* (New York: International University Press, 1957), cited in Loder, p. 162.

²⁶³ *TTM2*, p. 162. This becomes "a nucleus of trust as it begins to emerge and establish itself in the child from twelve to eighteen months of age," a crucial stage in Erikson's schema (p. 163).

²⁶⁴ There is some affinity here with Emmanuel Levinas' (b. 1906) use of the word 'face' to represent a relational phenomenology that sees the Other (*l'Autre*) - as God, as a symbol of transcendence - in the face of all others. The face-to-face relation of the self to the Other becomes the grounds for ethics. "The Other becomes my neighbour precisely through the way the face summons me, calls for me, begs for me, and in so doing recalls my responsibility, and calls me into question." From "Ethics as First Philosophy," included in *The Levinas Reader*, edited by Seán Hand (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 83. Levinas reinforces the centrality of face-to-face interaction operating as a deep epistemological dynamic within the self. There is no explicitly Christological element in his phenomenology, making it difficult to see how a four-dimensional, transformational experience can occur. At least one theologian, William Stacy Johnson, is exploring the theological dimensions of Levinas' work. David Ford, *Self and Salvation: Being Transformed* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) also identifies the importance of the face within the Christian experience.

²⁶⁵ Loder, p. 163. "Perhaps wholeness is experienced most primitively at the fetal level, but here the undifferentiated 'cosmos' of the child becomes personal and interpersonal, focusing on the face. The 'face' here is to be taken as an interpersonal reality and as a primal symbol of wholeness." (p. 163) Cf. the Jungian idea that the "face represents an archetype of wholeness because it is generally round and its center bears a cross. Jolande Székács Jacobi (1890- ?) quotes Justin Martyr (c.100-165) as follows: "The Cross is imprinted upon man, even upon his face." (*Apologia* quoted in *Complex, Archetype, Symbol* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 172n. *TTM2*, p. 163.

brings him to the conclusion that "what is established in the original face-to-face interaction is the child's sense of personhood and a universal prototype of the Divine Presence. Loder's turn to a consideration of the face as an image to engender identity and the formation of reality is suggestive of Silberer's discussion of the hypnagogic vision. The power of the external image, fantasy, or vision to reorient reality is now understood in terms of the face of the other - the face of the primary care giver and, as we shall see, the face of God revealed in Jesus Christ. The power of Silberer's paradigm continues to resonate throughout Loder's thinking.

The problem, however, is that the face-to-face interaction (like all encounters with an image, a fantasy, or vision) does not last very long. As the child develops she quickly begins to distinguish between the *presence* of the face and its *absence*, as well as the faces of strangers which might be threatening. By six months there is already "an anxiety reaction to the sense of the absence of the mother's face becomes the second organizer of the personality." Occurring at the same time, the child's verbal skills are developing and learning the meaning of the word, "No!" thus leading to another significant shift in the centering process of the person.²⁶⁶ The child begins to experience absence and negation on many levels and the developmental solutions to these threats set the stage for all further development.

Loder's description of this change is worth quoting at length:

The developmental solution to this overpowering sense of absence, combined with the external threat of punishment or abandonment (perhaps reliving the original existential negation of birth), is to shift the center of the personality from an integrative to a defensive posture. That is, the child's gathering sense of negation is gradually suppressed by his or her increased competency, activity, and mobility. However, the inevitable "No" - saying of parents (in gesture, word, and effect), which inhibits action and mobility, triggers anxiety and the deep sense of absence beneath. Trapped between inner absence and outer inhibition, the child takes the initiative to turn the inner sense of absence against the negating environment, and thereafter *incorporating* and *presuming* negation in all personal relationships, he or she seeks to set them up on his or her own terms. Thus, as the child moves into the fourteenth month of life, the emergent (in this case "emergency") center of the personality becomes his or her determined use of *negation*. This persistent use of "No," regardless of the issue at hand, is built on a dynamic pattern that in a more developed form would look very much like a reaction formation. In this defensive maneuver, one does just the opposite of what one wants to do with all the energy (and more) one would like to do the first thing. This, the fourth phase of Spitz's outline, establishes the dynamic foundation of the autonomous ego. It is constructive for the purpose of repressing hurtful or potentially destructive inner longings and to weigh outer considerations with appropriate objectivity, but it is destructive of the true centering of the personality.²⁶⁷

This very important paragraph illuminates a destructive pattern deep at work in the ego, a pattern of

²⁶⁶ TTM2, p. 164.

²⁶⁷ TTM2, p. 164.

defense before the threat of the "No" of negation, a pattern that begins in the early months of life and upon which the entire developmental stages of human growth are built. Considerable energy is expended by a child to assert one's identity in the early months and years of life. But at what cost? "The ego autonomy emerges as an outgrowth of the child's learning to function as the agent rather than the victim of negation. Thus, negation creates the foundation of the autonomous ego, and the personality is thereafter effectively divided."²⁶⁸ This is why Loder maintain "Something is inherently wrong with so-called human development."

It should be noted that the adaptive responses of the ego allow for survival and growth (which is a good thing), but they do not *satisfy* the deeper longing of the human spirit. Loder believes that "the developmental solution to the loss of the face and primal absence is only functional. As a *functional* negation of an existential condition, it cannot affect transformation of the *existential* condition."²⁶⁹ Once again, the point is made that "there is something existentially and theologically abnormal about functional normality; ego adaptation is existentially and theologically maladaptive."²⁷⁰ Loder wants us to see the way these functional abnormalities have distorted existential and theological considerations and therefore need to be transformed.

The human search for the face that will not go away persists throughout the lifespan. This need sometimes erroneously is met by looking to other people, looking to other faces to regain the power of the primal experience, only to be ultimately disappointed because the existential need can only be met through intimacy with God, who "gives the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:6)" This search becomes the prototype for one's encounter with God, face-to-face. Loder *does not* suggest that faith and the quest for God are a substitute for the search after the mother's face (this would be a psychological reductionism), but it serves as the *pattern* or foundation for *possible* faith. Loder sees in Martin Luther's (1483-1546) desire to look God in the face, for example, the hope of finding within God a "fundamental recentering of his personality on a Face that would not go away."²⁷¹ This is a critically important claim.

In a discussion of the search for the face in *TTM*, Loder offers what I consider to be the vital core

²⁶⁸ *TTM2*, p. 164-165.

²⁶⁹ *TTM2*, p. 165. "The constructive capacities of the autonomous ego are necessary for survival and satisfaction, but in an existential sense they are all peripheral; the integrative center, that primal longing for the cosmic ordering, self-confirming presence of a loving other, is split off and buried when ontogenesis turns in the direction of autonomy. This split is evident in that the innocent, wondering look of the infant increasingly shies away from face-to-face interaction - interaction that in adults inevitably generates profound ambivalence. (p. 165.)"

²⁷⁰ *TKM*, pp. 256-258.

²⁷¹ *TTM2*, p. 166.

of his thought. In my estimation, no paragraph better articulates the generative force behind Loder's thinking. It also illustrates the relational-personalism at the heart of his theology.²⁷² He declares, "The self is looking for the *impact* of that experience in which *one is given a place in the cosmos, confirmed as a self, and addressed by the presence of a loving other*. To say this is 'nothing but' regressive wishing is purely reductive; rather, the prototypical impact is set by the first encounter. The longing is for a loving other to address the whole person (as before), including the differentiated ego with all its competencies, and to set that whole-differentiated person into the cosmos as self-affirmed and beloved."²⁷³ His wish to avoid a reductionist psychologism with regards to religious experience is evident, yet he does not reject the wisdom gained from psychological considerations. The theologian cannot ignore Freud.

But beyond this, we see in these sentences a powerful summary of ideas close to Loder's heart, insights that find their origin in his own face-to-face encounter with God in moments of profound conviction. First we see that the encounter has impact. It has a force, an energy, a drive that brings about a radical change in the self. The impact drives one into existence, thrusts one into life. What the self discovers in the encounter is "a place in the cosmos." Here we see Loder making room for the "I." Before the vastness of the universe one becomes aware of one's own existence and declares, "I exist." Existence is given a place to be. One's life *matters* and, what is more, has *meaning*. The encounter speaks to the deepest existential needs of the human spirit. In "being confirmed as a self," the particularity of one's identity is heightened, and intensified. It is not annihilated or diminished by the Other. The "address by the presence of a loving other," not only calls one into being, but calls one into a deep, intimate relationship with the source of Being and life itself. The relational personalism inherent in Kierkegaard and Brunner is obvious. But for Loder this is more than just the adoption or development of ideas. The ideas are stressed because this is his understanding of the Christian life - *when God encounters an individual in Christ this is what happens, when one lives four-dimensionally this what the experience of conviction looks like*.

The question remains, however, whether or not the self will *allow* itself to search after that face. If the face was lost once, it could be lost again. Loder believes that authentic human existence is four-dimensionally constituted, indeed the human spirit longs to live four-dimensionally. Humanity is authentic when it is grounded in the Holy who establishes one's identity in the face of the void. But will the maladaptive ego cooperate with the Holy or distort what it means to be human? "This is

²⁷²Cf. Ebner's statement in chapter one, "It is self-love, self-regard. Nothing save a real relation to a real "Thou" can dispel this solitude of the soul; only a real conversation, in which we are actually addressed by another person, can make us responsible; this alone would be absolutely timely, personal, and therefore wholly serious."

²⁷³*TTM2*, p. 166. Italics in the text.

fundamentally the question of whether the personality will in fact undergo a recentering that displaces the ego or will, in quiet desperation, persist in its addiction, distorting and tearing two-dimensional life by attempting to stretch it over the four dimensions of human existence."²⁷⁴ Loder notes that:

... the development of the ego and all its various competencies (for example, language, intelligence, moral judgment) unfolds a different axis from that of spiritual development. The two axes of development may intersect and complement each other, but they diverge preeminently as to primary aim. The ego's aim is adaptation to its physical, social, and cultural environment so as to maximize satisfaction and to ensure survival. The human spirit is both in the service of the ego and transcends it. . . . When the human spirit finds its ground in the Divine Spirit, then its aim is disclosed as harmony between the divine and contingent orders, specifically personal union with the presence and purposes of God. Subsequently the human spirit, in agreement with divine order, will seek to bring all ego competencies into line with those purposes, even if it means counteradaptive behavior and suffering in place of satisfaction and survival. Human development needs to be studied in terms of both the divergence and the convergence of these two axes, recognizing that ultimately they converge only according to the higher, divine order, but never strictly within the purview of ego functions. It is not the result of a natural, progressive development of the ego.²⁷⁵

That recentering required can only take place through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

VIII. The Dynamics of Negation

Before we end this section we must stress the power of negation throughout the life-cycle, and the implications of this dynamic for the way we do theology. While theologians cannot ignore Freud, neither can theologians allow Freud to have the last word. Loder thus offers a theological reading of Freud's ego psychology. We cannot underestimate the force of the ego in the face of potential absence or annihilation.²⁷⁶ The adaptive strategies of the ego actually hinder, indeed, enslave the human spirit.²⁷⁷ Unless the process of negation is itself negated by someone or something beyond the control of the ego, the human spirit will be forever bound to either a two- or three-dimensional form of existence. The ego cannot bear its own annihilation and will go to great lengths to shut out the void and the Holy from its

²⁷⁴ *TTM2*, p. 166-167.

²⁷⁵ *LS*, pp. 72-73.

²⁷⁶ This is one of his most significant theological claims concerning human development. Lucy Bregman contends that Loder's identification of the process of negation is one of the most important contributions Loder makes in *LS*. "Existing models of development do not do justice to the negation at the core of the ego, at the core of the human from infancy onward," she writes. "Loder. . . insists that there is a deep strand of negation within the core of the human, which developmental theories note but try to avoid." *The Journal of Religion*, 80 (2000): 690. Thus, we ignore the "deconstructive potential of human thought" at our own peril. Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 8.

²⁷⁷ See also Ernest Becker *The Denial of Death* (New York: The Free Press, 1973), where he also identifies the defense strategies of the ego in the face of death, p. 23.

"world." The void, which is pure negation, imposes itself upon the ego in many proximate forms. But the ego will go to extraordinary lengths to avoid the presence of death. The strategies of adaptation and survival operative in the first few months of life remain intact until the forces of negation are negated through the transforming power of the Christ.

Loder offers five salient observations about negation. With these insights he makes a unique contribution to the study of human development. Development is always obstructed by the power of negation. First, Loder has observed through his experience as a psychotherapist and counselor that "probably the most painful human experience is nothingness in its many forms (loneliness, meaninglessness, death)." "No one," he claims, "overcomes this by any defensive or emergent competencies of the ego."²⁷⁸ The ego cannot fill in the gap because the ego is skilled in purely *functional* strategies that can never fathom or respond to the *existential* predicament that it experiences. "This is because the ego is constructed on the principle that absences, although a necessary part of existence, are to be denied and inflicted on the environment through objectification and control, but, from the egoistic standpoint, if possible they are to be 'managed,' not embraced and suffered through. The constructive aspects of the ego, creative in themselves, are nevertheless built on its defensive structure, and they presupposed negation throughout the ego's valiant, prepossessing concern for survival and long-term satisfaction."²⁷⁹

The second observation is that the persistent drive toward negation - again, that begins in the first few months of life and continues to death if not checked - increases exponentially with time. That is, the force of negation builds with intensity across one's life-span. This becomes an overwhelming burden of the ego to keep the void and even the Holy at bay.²⁸⁰ "Developmentally the defense against primal absence is an accumulating force that eventually (at least by the middle years) becomes an overbearing burden to the constructive powers of the ego, and the accumulated pain of nothingness slowly begins to

²⁷⁸ *TTM2*, p. 173.

²⁷⁹ *TTM2*, p. 173.

²⁸⁰ In Kierkegaardian parlance the ego keeps the void and even the Holy at a distance because of the "offense" of the truth that such realms bestow to the self. Kierkegaard wrote in his *Journal*, "The divine truth is 'the truth,' but in such a way that the world takes offense at it. It cannot be otherwise. But it cannot therefore be said that it [divine truth] gives offense." The reason the self takes offense to the truth for two theological reasons, as McCracken explains in his study of offense in the gospels, first "the divine is offensive to the natural world and second, that humans, who are necessarily part of the natural world, must encounter the offense in order to encounter the divine. . . . This difficult-to-bear, personal nature of an offense, its confrontational nature that makes it hard to ignore or to shrug off, its blatant attack on what we take to be our deepest selves or our strongest allegiances - these are precisely what give the offense its power. The offense has a way of bringing the individual to a moment of crisis, revealing the heart's desire." David McCracken, *The Scandal of the Gospels: Jesus, Story, and Offense* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p.33. The Kierkegaard *Journal* entry is cited by McCracken, p. 33.

draw the ego back toward that primal absence. As ego competence declines, the rate of the descent increases."²⁸¹ But there is no guarantee that it will decline or weaken. The desperate competencies of the ego can last right through to the end of the life-cycle.

"There is no possibility for recovering the lost face," Loder makes clear in the third point, "without eventually encountering nothingness." This is another significant point with considerable theological implications. The recovering of the lost face is always and only the work of God's grace encountered in a convictional experience of the Holy Spirit after the pattern of Christ's life, death and resurrection. It is the Holy Spirit who grants a four-dimensional human existence and that four-dimensional reality cannot be realized apart from a confrontation with nothingness, itself – with the void. The experience of the Holy "reaches back under the defensive structure of the ego and restores the same conditions for the mature, differentiated personality that the proto-typical facial encounter introduces for the emerging child ego."²⁸² The Holy, mediated in Christ, frees the ego to ground itself in something deeper than itself. Thus the ego discovers that, by trusting God, "its defensive maneuvers are reversible and that the primal absence is now bearable. Indeed it is even gracious because it haunts the self-sufficiency of the ego with constant reminders of its conflicted origins, calling it back again and again into communion with the Face that endures, the Face of God."²⁸³

The fourth point accentuates the theological veracity of Loder's theories. If his hypotheses ring true theologically, it is because "the patterns and dynamics of human development are prototypically related to basic theological concepts; such patterns and dynamics are original but deficient expressions of ultimate categories of meaning."²⁸⁴ The patterns identified in human development are not necessarily bad, but inadequate in and of themselves to yield a knowledge of God. They serve as patterns of correlation. "The face of the loving parent is prototypical of the Face of God; the early sense of absence is prototypical of the ultimate void, 'outer darkness' and abandonment of God. The transforming impact of a convictional experience [of the Holy] on the mature personality, in which negation incorporated becomes a reversible process, is a prototype of the transformational work of God Spirit's in history."²⁸⁵

²⁸¹"The corrective is the intentional turn inward and renewed search for the lost face." It was this idea that was central to Carl Jung's methodology and why personal transformation, intimately tied to his "process of individuation," could not take place until one reached middle-age. Loder, p. 173. On the origin of this "process" in his thought, see C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, recorded and Edited by Aniela Jaffé, Translated by Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p. 209.

²⁸²*TTM2*, p. 173.

²⁸³*TTM2*, p. 174-174.

²⁸⁴*TTM2*, p. 174. See also *LS*, pp. 17-38.

²⁸⁵*TTM2*, p. 174.

Finally, the last implication of the power of negation is that in the Face-less existence of the maladaptive ego one finds a "denial of person-centeredness." In a Face-less world, the struggle of the ego to survive and be satisfied is often achieved at the expense of other people. "To be sure, people are worked into the ego's 'world,' but they are secondary to survival and the satisfactions that can be built on the dynamics of negation incorporated."²⁸⁶ When a person encounters the Holy, the Holy "restores the original impact of the Face and make[s] negation dynamics reversible." What this means is that when the Holy encounters a human being, freed from the enslavement of the ego, the Holy will "generate a person-centered life of four-dimensional proportions."²⁸⁷

To experience the Holy in a moment of conviction is to undergo transformation, now understood as the negation of existential negation. By "existential negation" Loder refers to the negation inherent to being. It is "the ultimate negation of the capacity of the ego to construct its world, sometimes called 'ego shock.'" This is the domain of the void. "All negation in some measure points to the void, but in existential negation the person is immersed in it."²⁸⁸ Transformational negation is a negation of the negation or "double negation" whereby a "new integration emerges" for the ego that could never be achieved by itself "establishing a gain over the original negated state of condition," in that the experience "establishes a new state of being which includes the first negation as an essential element of the gain."²⁸⁹ Convictional transformation confronts the negation inherent in being, and creates a new existence, but in such a way as to integrate negated negation into the incorporation. Existential negation itself is taken up into a larger dynamic of transformation, but without destroying the negation's constituency in being. Negation remains a part of being, but in transformation it is not definitive for being. Negation loses its edge, as it were, and is no longer a threat to the ego.

With regards to Loder's extensive research on the dynamics of negation in the human spirit he has made a seminal contribution in our grasp of the process of transformation.²⁹⁰ In fact, Loder sees the reluctance of Fowler to talk about the power of negation in understanding faith development as a major flaw of his theories. Transformation requires the "negation of negation" in order to achieve an ontological gain that cannot be achieved through the natural, although maladaptive processes of human development. To focus on the stages of human development alone (as Fowler has done), Grannel notes

²⁸⁶*TTM2*, p. 174.

²⁸⁷*TTM2*, p. 174.

²⁸⁸*TTM2*, pp. 159ff. See also Loder's chapter cited above, "Negation and Transformation: A Study in Theology and Human Development," pp. 168ff.

²⁸⁹Loder, p. 168.

²⁹⁰This is also the view of Andrew Grannel, "The Paradox of Formation and Transformation," *Religious Education* 80 (1985): 390.

(agreeing with Loder), "hides a latent negative reality, i. e. the repetitive failures and insufficiencies of each new integration. . . transformation necessitates the overcoming of the negative 'other' force which everywhere and always fragments."²⁹¹

In order for this to occur, convictional transformation requires a *mediator*. The ego does not have the ability to embrace existential negation, nor does it possess the power to overcome its drive towards self-destruction (*destrudo*). For Loder, the only one who has demonstrated the capacity to encounter death and experience it without being crushed by it is Jesus Christ. It is here that we begin to have a clearer picture of Loder's Christology which informs his view of life in Christ. "Christ crucified and resurrected is taken as a paradigm of the mediator of transformation. . . Christ becomes the adequate 'grammar' of existential transformation because in his crucifixion he takes ultimate annihilation into himself and in his resurrection existential negation is negated."²⁹²

In an attempt to clarify what he means by transformational negation, Loder turned to Claude Levi-Strauss's (b. 1908) study of the construction and analysis of myth in *Structural Anthropology* and developed the following formula or "design" to account for the ontological gain experienced in transformation: $f_x A : f_y B : f_x B : f_{A-I} Y$. The entire movement depends upon the work of the mediator (B). The mediator, Loder suggests, has a "dual function, one positive or constructive (f_y), and one negative or destructive (f_x)." As stated earlier, the pivotal move that accounts for change is the double negation exercised by the mediator (" $f_x B$ negates an original negative situation $f_x A$." Furthermore, the redemptive activity of f_y of B, which "represents the redemptive activity (f_y) of Christ (B)," must be equal to or greater than the f_x of A, which "represents the double-bind condition of original sin (A), whereby every effort (f_x) to extricate oneself only intensifies the condition." If it is not, then the double negation will be "effective in freeing the "redeemed state (A-I) to live in and become a function of the positive function of the mediator ($f_{A-I} Y$)." This, Loder maintains, is a way to speak of the "deep structure that underlies the Christ event [that is, the crucifixion and resurrection], as well as a structure by which we comprehend the work of the Holy Spirit as 'Spiritus Creator.'"²⁹³ We will take up this pneumatological statement in the next section.

Two aspects of double-negation need to be highlighted. First, transformation is different from anything that can be realized through a process of socialization or development. It is not a natural part

²⁹¹Grannel, p. 390. Grannel affirms "the magnitude of Loder's contributions to our understanding of transformation. He has taken transformation with utmost seriousness and has offered a radical reappraisal of its significance for the heart of all human functions and indeed the heart of the human condition itself. (p. 395)"

²⁹²Loder, p. 169.

²⁹³*TTM2*, p. 187. See also "Negation and Transformation: A Study in Theology and Human Development," p. 191.

of existence. When experienced it always grants something new.

In Christ, death dies; by his becoming sin, all sin is canceled. Christ thus creates an ontological gain for those who are in his nature. The crucifixion is a *sine qua non* of the new being in Christ, lest transformation be truncated in a fantastic aberration or elevation of one's human existence. Likewise, resurrection is a *sine qua non* as the opposite side of crucifixion, lest God become preeminently an executioner.²⁹⁴

Loder does not attach himself to any particular theory of the atonement. Instead, his primary concern is to establish the point that "the personal appropriation of Christ as mediator depends upon the mystical connection between the ego's underlying self-defeating nature and the suffering and abandonment which Christ experiences on the cross."²⁹⁵

The second point serves to draw our attention to themes we have addressed throughout. The Christian experience primarily entails the transformation of the ego. Included in this is the recentering or re-grounding of the personality in the personhood of God. "Ego transformation may then be understood not as destruction to the ego, but as a clear-cut recentering of the personality around a transcendental reality that points to the invisible God." This is what occurs in lives that are regenerated by the Spirit of Christ, which led Paul to talk about, "I, but yet, not I, but Christ. (Galatians 3:20)" Indeed, "*personality has the structural potential for being transformed and recentered on an effective vision of God.*"²⁹⁶ When Loder spoke of "mystical connection," above, he did not mean a mystical union often associated with mysticism. Union implies a melding of identities into one. Loder resists this understanding of the Christian life at every turn by stressing the need to make a space for the individual, by affirming the "I." This is not to deny that there is a connection, of course. Even the word "union" can be used provided that one envisions it *relationally*, consisting of two entities that remain distinct *in* the relationship. It is similar to the way Karl Barth (1886-1968) came to talk about the divinity and humanity of Christ as possessing an "indissoluble differentiation," an "inseparable unity," an "indestructible order."²⁹⁷ The recentering is the work of the Holy Spirit who educates the human spirit to its innate condition, but also to its potential when grounded in God. Conviction is an experience of

²⁹⁴*TTM2*, p. 161. "Jesus is the only one who can give us the meaning of life because alone has overcome its end point; he alone has satisfied the drive of the human spirit to claim the last word in the face of death." *LS*, p. 29.

²⁹⁵Loder, p. 186.

²⁹⁶Loder, p. 179. Italics in text. "... in knowing and being known by Jesus Christ, where the not-I is the presence of the Spirit of God, my very identity as a self is transformed and inverted; my dialectical identity is newly *composed* by the infinite and eternal not-I, who cancels my need to compose my own ultimate identity through the ego." See F. LeRon Shults, p. 23. Italics in the text.

²⁹⁷Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. T. F. Torrance and G. W. Bromiley, III/2 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), p. 437, cited in *LS*, p. 33. See also Loder, "The Place of Science in Practical Theology: The Human Factor," p. 23.

recentering, whereby the deep structure or logic of the Holy Spirit engages the exocentric drive of the human spirit and transforms it. This forms the basis of Loder's relational pneumatology.

IX. The *analogia spiritus* and the Work of *Spiritus creator*

Loder sees the primary charge of the Holy Spirit is the work of conviction. As we have seen, the logic of conviction or transformation as a "patterned process by which the Holy Spirit transforms all transformations of the human spirit" involves all four dimensions of being. It is a pattern that is initiated, mediated, and concluded by Christ as mediated by the Holy Spirit.²⁹⁸ After 1970, there is a dramatic shift towards a consideration of pneumatology, a relational pneumatology which he describes as an *analogia spiritus*, was developed over the 1970's and comes to fruition in the *The Transforming Moment*. It is the same *analogia spiritus* that stands at the center of *The Knight's Move* and is incorporated into his understanding of human development from a theological perspective in *The Logic of the Spirit*. Because conviction is the work of the Holy Spirit, the outcome is always an ontological gain for an individual. Transformation yields something new, summed up in Loder's adoption of Basil's (c.330-379) designation of the Holy Spirit in *De Spiritu Sancto* as *Spiritus creator* - the creative spirit. The use of the *Spiritus creator* designation and the development of an *analogia spiritus* are quintessential Loder. They stand as perhaps his most unique and ingenious contribution to way theologians think about the Holy Spirit and the way a believer experiences the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in one's life.

Loder wants to place pneumatological considerations at the center of the Christian life as a well-needed corrective to the over-emphasis upon christological definitions that have, ironically, burdened the mission of the church. Gary D. Badcock, for example, has shown in a recent work that the early centuries of the church spent far more theological energy exploring a *Logos* theology that sought to define the person and work of the Son. This was done at the expense of a detailed consideration of the Holy Spirit. The pneumatology that developed early in the formulation of the creed at Constantinople is ambiguous, which has led to an "emphasis of the Son over against the Spirit in Christian theology."²⁹⁹ The Constantinople creed of 381 A. D. is an improvement over the creed of 325 A. D., in that "at least something positive is asserted about the Spirit."³⁰⁰ Nevertheless, Constantinople does not explicitly

²⁹⁸ TTM2, p. 93.

²⁹⁹ Gary D. Badcock, *Light of Truth & Fire of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 56-61, 61.

³⁰⁰ Badcock, p. 59. The Creed of 325, of Nicaea, states quite briefly a belief in the Holy Spirit, the Creed of 381 states, that we believe "in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Life-giver, who proceeds from the Father, who is worshipped and glorified together with the Father and Son. . . ." I am conscious of the division between the Eastern and Western church over the *filioque* clause. I do not want to get bogged down in that controversy other than to affirm that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, and

describe the relationship between the Son and the Spirit. This glaring omission, Babcock argues, would cause major theological problems for the church, problems we are still dealing with today.³⁰¹ Thus, the early church's preoccupation to affirm the divinity and humanity of Jesus seemed to push to the periphery questions concerning the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Christological positions were firmly pronounced at the Council of Nicea in A. D. 325 which remain normative for the church today, but the same is not true for pneumatological assertions. Athanasius (c.296-377) noted that since Origin (c.185-c.254), the Holy Spirit lagged behind in devotional practice. Eusebius (c.265-339) wrote that the Holy Spirit was "in third rank," in third power," and "third from the Supreme Cause."³⁰² And Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930) referred to the Holy Spirit as the "orphan doctrine" of Christian theology.³⁰³ Indeed, George Hunsinger asserts that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, "has never been stabilized by a conciliar decision of the church, although it is as vexing, contested and uncertain as any doctrine the church has ever known."³⁰⁴

Loder sees the confessional statement, "We believe also in the Holy Spirit" added on at the end, "almost as an afterthought." He suggests this attitude can still be seen in the worshipping community and in theologians for whom the "doctrine still runs a poor third, as a derivative from Trinity or Christology."³⁰⁵ This seems paradoxical, since "without the Spirit, God would not be the God of the Scriptures, Jesus Christ would be a remote historical phenomenon, the church would be merely a

is to be worshipped as like the Father and the Son. Procession from the Father alone severs the relationship with the Son. This would contradict scripture which says the Spirit is the Son and the Father. Without proceeding from the Father and the Son, opens the "danger of a mysticism of the Spirit without any foundation in or relation to christology.(p. 82)" See also Alasdair I. C. Heron, "'Who Proceedeth From the Father and the Son': The Problem of the Filioque," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 24(1971): 149-167. Loder never addressed the *filioque* question.

³⁰¹That this remains a problem within the church today is evidenced by the number of people who are confused about the nature of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit's connection with Jesus Christ, and the Spirit's relationship to the Father and Son in the Trinity. I regularly encounter this in the parish.

³⁰²J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Church Doctrines*, revised edition (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1978).

³⁰³Harnack notes that the "scientific theology of the apologists did, in general, not know what to do with [the Holy Spirit], and even the 3d century the majority viewed the Holy Spirit as a power." *Outlines of the History of Dogma*, Translated by Edwin Knox Mitchell with an Introduction by Philip Rieff (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), p. 266ff.

³⁰⁴From his chapter, "The Mediator of Communion: Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit," in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, edited by John Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 177.

³⁰⁵See Loder's discussion of the history of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in *TKM*, pp. 20-28. He offers Tillich, Barth, Moltmann and Pannenberg as examples. Since 1992, Jürgen Moltmann has published *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993).

socially-constructed character-building agency, and the ethical life of Christianity would be purely a matter of forming personal and social conscience."³⁰⁶ But it really is not all that surprising when one considers that Jesus said the Holy Spirit is like the wind (John 3), coming and going with a freedom that is disturbing for those who prefer order and control. There is, by nature, an elusiveness to the person and work of the Spirit, so that life within the Spirit is, as the Iona Community in Scotland reminds us, like being on a wild goose chase, never quite within one's grasp.³⁰⁷ Hence, "as the history of the church's treatment of the Holy Spirit makes abundantly clear," explains Douglas John Hall, "it was exactly this potentiality of the third person of the Trinity to reintroduce life and nuance and movement that was felt in the church as an enormous threat."³⁰⁸ The same threat, then, threatens the church today. So that Hendrikus Berkhof (b. 1914) is correct in perceptively identifying that, "To a great extent official church history is the story of the defeats of the [Holy] Spirit."³⁰⁹ Loder's wants to change this.

The way he proposes to make this correction is by reenvisioning the Holy Spirit as relational. This is a direct response to Alasdair I. C. Heron's request for such a consideration, as well as Thomas F. Torrance's call to see the Holy Spirit as person who exists relationally in the Trinity and relates, person-to-person in the Christian experience. Torrance in particular has pointed to what he calls the "persistent error of Romanism and Protestantism; whereby one confounds the Spirit with the spirit of the Church, . . . and the other confounds the Spirit of God with the human spirit. Thus knowledge of the Spirit is dissolved in the subjectivities of the consciousness of the Church or of the individual, and the products of this consciousness, in its collective or individual genius, are put forward as operations of the Holy Spirit."³¹⁰

Drawing upon Athanasius and Gregory of Nazianzus (329-389), Loder wants to affirm that the

³⁰⁶TKM, p. 20. To a considerable extent, I think Loder has diagnosed the present state of crisis both within the theological academy and within the church. We will take up this assertion in the last chapter.

³⁰⁷George Macleod (1898-1991), founder of the present-day Iona Community claimed that the Celtic symbol for the Holy Spirit was the wild goose. It is still used today by the Iona Community, Iona, Scotland where pilgrimages around the island are called "chasing the wild goose." Recent studies, however, have not been able to confirm Macleod's claims. See Ian Bradley, *Colonies of Heaven: Celtic Models for Today's Church* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2000), p. x.

³⁰⁸Douglas John Hall, *Thinking the Faith: Christian Theology in a North American Context* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), p. 106.

³⁰⁹Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Study of the Faith*, Translated by Sier Woudstra (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 42, cited in Douglas John Hall, "An Awkward Church," *Theology and Worship Occasional Paper No. 5*, published by The Presbyterian Church, (U. S. A.), 1993, p. 4.

³¹⁰Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (Lond: SCM Press, Ltd., 1965), pp. 227-228. Alasdair I. C. Heron, *The Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983).

Holy Spirit is not simply the spirit of the church or another name for the human spirit, nor is it simply a power, force or even feeling, but a "full and distinct personal reality" who *relates* to and inseparable from the Father and the Son.³¹¹ The Holy Spirit exists in a *perichoretic* relationship with the Trinity. In this dancing or moving around within the Trinity a space is created for the persons of the Trinity to relate to one another. As such, "there is mutual interpenetration at all points without loss of identity. Individuality and mutuality are simultaneously affirmed and the members of the Trinity can change places without changing their identity." The "unity of the Trinity is the relationality, and the relationality is the unity."³¹² Loder's high esteem for the Greek fathers and their understanding of the Trinity resonates with his relational-personalist outlook. The relational model of the Trinity becomes the model by which the Trinity also relates to the universe, particularly the human spirit. It is also why Loder claimed that "relationality is ontologically prior to rationality."³¹³ Relationality not only constitutes the Godhead, but relationality constitutes the created order (God in relationship to the "other" of creation). Indeed, as we have seen, relationality constitutes reality.

Therefore, central to Loder's thinking is the belief that the Holy Spirit can *never* be confused with the human spirit. To support him in this claim, Loder relies heavily on George Hendry's (b. 1904), *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology*, which persuasively argues that these cannot be conflated.³¹⁴ Hendry is one of the few theologians writing after Barth to stress this differentiation.³¹⁵ A cursory reading of the New Testament would show that Christians viewed the *Holy Spirit* as distinct *from*, yet in relation *with* human beings, as spirit (Romans 8:16; 1 Corinthians 2: 10-16)." This is an extremely important distinction that needs to be upheld because it offers a way beyond the muddling conception of the Spirit that has remained operative in the church, especially since the nineteenth century, shaped by Georg Hegel's (1770-1831) *Phänomenologie der Geistes* (*Phenomenology of Spirit*) of 1807.³¹⁶

³¹¹TKM, p. 23.

³¹²TKM, p. 23

³¹³LS, p. 8.

³¹⁴George S. Hendry, *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965). See also Hendry's discussion of the Holy Spirit in *The Gospel of the Incarnation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), pp. 159-161.

³¹⁵That the confusion remains is evidenced in Colin Gunton, *The One, The Three and The Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), as well as, in recent studies by Gary D. Badcock, *Light of Truth & Fire of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), John McIntyre, *The Shape of Pneumatology: Studies in the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997).

³¹⁶The conflation becomes especially clear in the closing sections of the *Phänomenologie* where Hegel discusses how the Subject becomes self-conscious of itself as the self-unfolding of Spirit experienced as *History*, "a *conscious*, self-mediating process - the Spirit emptied out into time." G. W.

Hendry is not the only person to stress this distinction. Barth also identifies the differentiation. But Barth remained ambiguous about *how* the Holy Spirit relates to the human spirit. Hendry provides a way for Loder to conceptualize the connection. Let us turn briefly to Barth, then let us see the way Loder appropriates Hendry in the formation of his *analogia spiritus*.

It was Barth who stressed the theological danger contained within conflation.³¹⁷ As early as October 1929, in a lecture entitled "The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life," Barth sets forth a vision of the need for theology to reappropriate a theology of the Holy Spirit in contrast to an idealist understanding of the Spirit, rampant in nineteenth century philosophy.³¹⁸ Since Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), German philosophy had been shaped by the acknowledgment that there is a portion of the consciousness not shaped by the material world and is free vis-a-vis matter. "Spirit," mind, or consciousness transcends the phenomenal world. Lovin summarizes the implications of this for nineteenth century thought:

The freedom of consciousness, rather than the determinations of the material world, enables us to understand ourselves and the events that impinge upon us. Spirit, not matter, is the key to history. According to Hegel, however, this does not mean that history is simply a sequence of spontaneous events. The freedom of Spirit follows a law, but it is a law of reason, not of physical causation. To understand history and human beings is to understand this movement of Spirit in them.³¹⁹

The strong, close relationship and dependence of theology upon philosophy in the nineteenth century meant that German Idealism made a considerable impression upon Protestant German theology.

What form did such ideas take in theology? Lovin notes that, "the pervasive Spirit implies that the spiritual aspirations of human individuals are indeed the most important things about them, the link

F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, translated by A. V. Miller with Analysis of the Text and Foreword by J. N. Findlay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 48-493, italics in original. Quentin Lauer, *A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology of the Spirit* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1987). For a discussion on the problems with Hegel's pneumatology as the grounds of Christian faith see Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 491-493ff. "Hegel cannot accommodate the relations of God and man as they must be for Christian faith," he argues, because Hegel cannot conceive of a mutual relation between the two, because "no finite spirit can realize the infinite" without the infinite losing its freedom (p. 491). On the use of Hegel by theologians see Karl Barth, *Protestant Thought: From Rousseau to Ritschl* (Salem, New Hampshire, Aye Company, 1987), pp. 268-305.

³¹⁷Some have said of Barth (including Barth himself) that he was primarily a pneumatic theologian, resting his theological system upon the need to confess the "Spirit as Lord." This statement was made by Barth as late as 1968. Philip J. Rosato, S.J., *The Spirit As Lord: The Pneumatology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1981), p. v.

³¹⁸Karl Barth, *The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life: The Theological Basis of Ethics*, Translated by R. Birch Hoyle. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993. As seen in Barth's brother, Heinrich (1890-1965), a philosopher, who once lectured on "The Concept of 'Spirit' in German Idealism."

³¹⁹Barth, p. xi.

to a more permanent and meaningful reality than their fragile material circumstances can provide. In German, as in English, the philosophers' concept of Spirit (*Geist*) as the pervasive reality that orders and gives meaning to events lends itself to association with the theological doctrine of the Holy Spirit (*der heilige Geist*) as the creative power by which God brings the world into being, orders it, and reveals this order and purpose to human beings, whose capacity to receive this revelation marks the participation in Spirit that is the divine image in them."³²⁰ Thus, it is easy to see how the 'Spirit' of German Idealism was conflated with the theological image of the Holy Spirit, which meant the conflation of the human spirit with the Holy Spirit.³²¹ Heinrich Barth, for example, wanted to return to Kant, "to give the Spirit a place." But it was only a place afforded by the human knower. The human spirit would be the appropriate starting point to come to know the place of the Holy Spirit.³²²

Karl Barth could not accept this. Human spirituality could never be the starting place for a knowledge of the Holy Spirit. We must be clear about of what or of whom we speak. Barth writes, "Indeed, the Spirit of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful, or even the Spirit of Love, or the Spirit of Goodness married to Holiness, in which man has a share more or less, is certainly the Evil Spirit when taken as a substitute for the Holy Spirit. To make that other spirit the conqueror over sin is to put a fox in charge of geese!"³²³ The Holy Spirit is just that: a *Holy* Spirit, not limited to the contingency of human knowledge. And if the Holy Spirit is present at all in creation it cannot be divorced from what we know of God as Creator and Christ. In fact, to speak of the Holy Spirit is to speak of Christ, and not the human spirit. "There is no reference," notes George Hendry, "in the New Testament to any work of the Spirit apart from Christ. The Spirit is, in an exclusive sense, the Spirit of Christ."³²⁴ To say an experience is

³²⁰Barth, p. xi. "The mysterious relationship of identity and objectivity by which persons both are and are aware of their own consciousness becomes, for the philosophy of idealism, the paradigm for understanding the theological mystery of the Trinity, the unity of God in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." (p. xi) See also Barth's, *Church Dogmatics* IV/3, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark), p. 761.

³²¹A good example is Hegel's use of traditional concepts like "Spirit" and imposing upon it a meaning that is very different from the Christian tradition. Richard Campbell has identified places where Hegel does this throughout his system. "For all his sense of historicity, and for all that he presents his philosophy as a demythologized exposition of the content of Christianity, Hegel understands philosophy in terms of the Platonic *theoria*, a conceptual detachment from practical engagement with reality in order to contemplate and reflect discursively upon it. What he is seeking is scientific knowledge (*Wissenschaft*), a systematic set of necessary theoretical statements, encompassing the totality of all there is." *Truth and Historicity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 294.

³²²Barth, p. xii.

³²³Barth, p. 25.

³²⁴George Hendry, *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology*, Revised and Enlarged Edition. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), p. 26. "The Spirit continues the presence of Christ beyond the brief span of his historical appearance and completes it by effecting its inward apprehension among men. In both emphases, however, the Spirit is presented in a purely Christocentric reference (p. 26)." See also

spiritual, within a Christian context, means that it is an experience that has its point of origin not within the human knower but in the mind of God. Hence, there must be a clear distinction between the human spirit and the Holy Spirit. What knowledge there is of God in Christ can only be mediated through the Person of the Holy Spirit. "But, as it is written, 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him,' God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what person knows a man's thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2: 9-11)."

Barth himself has said that his theology has been shaped by the work and power of the Holy Spirit. "To groan 'Come, Creator Spirit' is, according to Romans 8, more hopeful than to triumph as if we already had him. You are already introduced to "my theology" if you have heard this groan."³²⁵ When the creative presence of the Holy Spirit engages the human spirit, the Spirit exposes the internal contradictions and powers of resistance in the human spirit which at the same time opens up the human spirit to be transformed and made alive. This is a process that reflects the pattern of Christ's death and resurrection.

Patterned after the person of Christ, the Holy Spirit is engaged in eschatological endeavors of redemption, bringing about new-ness to humanity and the entire created order. Barth describes the work in this way:

The Holy Spirit makes a new heaven and a new earth, and therefore new men, new families, new relationships, new politics. It has no respect for old traditions simply because they are traditions, for old solemnities simply because they are old, for old powers simply because they are powerful. The Holy Spirit has respect only for truth, for itself. The Holy Spirit establishes the righteousness of heaven in the midst of the unrighteousness of the earth and will not stop or stay until all that is dead has been brought back to life and a new *world* has come into being.³²⁶

Contained in these sentences is a profound wisdom and insight into the way the Holy Spirit encounters and participates in the human spirit in order to bring about a new *world*, a way that has no affiliation with the evolving *Geist* of the Hegelian dialectic or anything that could be achieved by human willfulness alone. By new world we can take Barth to mean a new reality, World in a Loderian sense, a new phenomenal experience of World seen through the eyes of faith. It is eschatological in that the Holy Spirit graciously imposes the righteousness of God's realm in and with the unrighteousness of a fallen creation (which includes fallen creatures), not to destroy, but to judge in order to restore to life, *new* life,

Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1980), p. 482.

³²⁵Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, Translated with a new Foreword by Douglas Horton, (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1978 [1928], p. 134.

³²⁶Barth, p. 49-50.

new possibility, new ways of seeing the world, that are not constituted or constructed by anything human.

Barth has established *that* there is a distinction between the Holy Spirit and human spirit, but he never attempts to explain *how* they connect. Indeed, the question of *how* the Holy Spirit-human spirit connection takes place remains a major weakness in his work and other recent theological discussions.³²⁷ In Badcock, and Heron, as well as John McIntyre's, *The Shape of Pneumatology: Studies in the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, Jürgen Moltmann's, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* and Michael Welker's, *God the Spirit*, certainly the most exhaustive recent studies on the nature of the Spirit, a connection between the Holy Spirit and the human spirit is affirmed, yet there is no attempt to explore the nature of the relationality, the corresponding dynamics that explains how such an exchange takes place.³²⁸ And they all fail to take into consideration of the psychological drives of the human spirit. Badcock does suggest that for:

... a theology of the Spirit, who is the 'life-giver' as well as the Lord, what matters is the life embraced, and not simply the truth held, as if that were sufficient for itself, or as if it were its own goal. Here, we are approaching the requirements for a real pneumatology and leaving behind the abstract ideal of Logos as self-sufficient, inclusive symbol of all theology. Or, to put the point another way, we are complementing the ideal of Logos with what it implies and that to which it leads - life in the Spirit.³²⁹

In identifying the Holy Spirit as the giver of life we move toward a convictional understanding of the Christian experience. *How* the Spirit gives life, the logic of that pattern, is what Loder is trying to articulate and in doing so makes an invaluable contribution to pneumatological considerations. The embrace of life in the Spirit forces us to learn from the human sciences what it means to be human, as Loder has shown, at the same time our understanding of humanity is informed by and grounded in a biblical anthropology.

Loder sees the "*analogia spiritus*" as an intimate, transformational relationship between the human spirit and the Holy Spirit. He develops his pneumatology by paying close attention to references to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament and by incorporating the work of Hendry, Michael Polanyi, Douglas Hofstadter, and Regin Prenter (1907-?). But Loder goes well beyond Barth and others by suggesting that the Holy Spirit actually *engages* human experience through the intimacy of a

³²⁷Bo Karen Lee, "The Holy Spirit and Human Agency in Barth's Doctrine of Sanctification," *Koinonia*, XII (2000): 176. In CD (IV/4) Barth does suggest that a possible link is found in the act of prayer, the most important "action" of the Christian life.

³²⁸John McIntyre, *The Shape of Pneumatology: Studies in the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997); Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993); Michael Welker, *God the Spirit*. Translated by John F. Hoffmeyer. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994).

³²⁹Badcock, p. 139.

relationship, Holy Spirit to human spirit.³³⁰

The New Testament is not univocal when it speaks about the Holy Spirit and its relationship with humanity. The synoptics, the Pauline and Johannine literature, and Acts are not in complete agreement about this relationship. It is obvious that God's Spirit is upon Jesus throughout his earthly ministry, it is through the presence of the Spirit that he begins his work in Luke 4. In the farewell discourses recounted by John, Jesus promises to send another, a "paraclete" who will lead his disciples into all truth. (John 16: 7-15). The clearest, and probably earliest, statements on the relationship between the Spirit and Christ can be found in the Pauline literature, and so Loder looks to Paul for the pattern. It can be argued that pneumatology is at the heart of Paul's theology with more than 140 references to *pneuma* (S/spirit) in his letters. Indeed, S. Neil and N. T. Wright suggest that "Paul's doctrine of the Spirit is far more central and characteristic than his doctrine of justification by faith."³³¹ Loder develops his model from a close reading of Romans 6, 1 Corinthians 2, Philippians 2 within the Pauline corpus and beyond Paul in Hebrews in 4:12-13.³³²

Because the *locus classicus* of this inter-relationship for Paul, and for Loder is 1 Corinthians 2 we will focus only on this text and how Loder interprets it.³³³ In a discussion on the authority and content of his preaching, Paul tells us that he relied not on human wisdom but a demonstration of the "Spirit and of power." To the mature in the faith, however, he grants the wisdom of God, "not a wisdom of the age or the rulers of the age." He writes:

But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they did they

³³⁰There is a tendency within the Christian theological tradition to question the possibility of the Holy Spirit participating in the life a person. See Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), *The Christian Faith (Glaubenslehre, 1821-1822)*, edited by H. R. Mackintosh & J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1948). "...the Holy Spirit is not something that, although divine, is not united with our human nature, but only somehow influences it from without. . . . There is indeed no way of imagining how the Spirit's gifts could be within us, and He Himself remain without, or how He is to influence us from without except through human speech and significant action - which just means that He is already within, and influencing, someone else. And the man on whom the Spirit works is not thereby made a participator in the Spirit (p. 571)."

³³¹Of this number, 'Holy Spirit' is used seventeen times, the 'Spirit of God' is used sixteen times, and 'Spirit of Christ' used three times. See Gordon D. Fee, *Paul, the Spirit and the People of God* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), p. 28. See also S. Neill and N. T. Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861-1986* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 203, cited in Fee, p. 8.

³³²*TTM2, TKM*, James E. Loder, "Incisions from a Two-Edged Sword: The Incarnation and the Soul/Spirit Relationship," in Brian Childs & David W. Waanders, eds. *The Treasure of Earthen Vessels: Exploration in Theological Anthropology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994).

³³³Badcock also sees this the central text for experience of the Spirit for theological interpretation. He prefers to start with verse 11b, "No one comprehends what is God's except the Spirit of God." However, it seems to me, that verse 10, "For the Spirit searches everything even the depths of God," should be emphasized in Paul's experience.

would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived what God has prepared for those who love him," God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what person knows a man's thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us in God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit. The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. "For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

The relationality of the Holy Spirit to human spirit is a present reality for Paul. It is not something that once was, or something that will be. He experiences the power of Christ in the Spirit who testifies to this fact in Paul's own spirit. What is more, the search of the Holy Spirit from out of the depths of God speaks to the depths of the human spirit, and *yields* a knowledge of God, of self, the void and the world. That knowledge is the "mind of Christ." The Spirit represents and enfleshes in our life the deepest character of God, revealed in the life and death of Christ, and grants to us a new life in Christ.

Thus, in the encounter with God in Christ, face-the-face, the work of the Holy Spirit establishes a four-dimensional reality for the human spirit, which involves an ego that is grounded in the Spirit of the Risen Christ who frees the human spirit to grow in love after the pattern of Christ. Loder is most helpful in identifying and stressing the relationality of the Holy Spirit and the human spirit, without conflating them.³³⁴ For this emphasis Loder is indebted to the work of George Hendry. In his often neglected work on the Holy Spirit, Hendry argued that the Reformed tradition is guilty of minimizing the significance of the human spirit in our theological considerations. The Reformers' stress upon *sola gratia* has led to a misunderstanding of grace as revealed in the incarnation. The primary Augustinian understanding of grace is that is it condescension. The Almighty God who dwells in "the high and holy place" (Isaiah 57:15), veiled in light unapproachable (1 Timothy 6:16) moved down toward humanity to forge a relationship. The movement down, as it were, or of God moving toward humanity first is essential in an understanding of grace. But Hendry also identified another aspect of God's grace revealed in the incarnation, one that Augustine did not take into account, and that is the element of accommodation. "The only begotten Son of God. . .came down from heaven. . .and he was made man," as the creed states and the eternal Word of God who was God "became flesh and dwelt among us.(John

³³⁴We find in Pannenberg and in Barth, a tendency to minimize, if not eradicate the significance of the human spirit. "In a Christian anthropology the statement that 'man has spirit' must be understood as meaning that the spirit is 'something that comes to man, something not essentially his own but to be received and actually received by him.' Human beings are body and soul, but they are not spirit in the same way. The spirit is the source of their life and is at work in them. 'But while He is in man, He is not identical with him.'" Here Pannenberg quotes Barth (*Church Dogmatics*, III/2, trans. H. Knight et al. 1960), p. 354) in *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, p. 522. See also, *LS*, p. 33.

1: 1-14)" The humanity of accommodation is humanity that is endowed with a created spirit, the hallmark of which is freedom.³³⁵

The implications of Hendry's analysis are far reaching and have been pressed to service in Loder's methodology. Summarizing his indebtedness to Hendry and capturing the primary thrust of his work, Loder writes:

To be in relation with God is to be related Spirit-to-spirit, or Freedom-to-freedom. God does not dehumanize humanity or "un-man" humanity, to use Hendry's words, in order to relate to humans. Irresistible grace, so called, needs to be reinterpreted as a grace whose keynote is nonresistance; God does not overrule human freedom but engages it in order that the I-Thou of the God-human relationship not be reduced to the I-it order. By choosing to become human, God affirms humanity, but the humanity affirmed is essentially spirit. It is not correct to say that humanity has lost the image of God; it would be better to say that humanity has lost its original of which it is the image. Moreover, there is no way the human spirit by itself as human spirit can reverse the loss; the created spirit is ontologically incapable of choosing the Creator as a possibility. Thus, when grace enters the situation, the disoriented human spirit is not destroyed by grace; it is transformed so that it may choose freely to testify with God's Spirit that we are the children of God (Romans 8:16). Thus, the impact of grace on the human spirit is to awaken it to a true sense of its freedom to be itself as image *restored* to its original.³³⁶

The presence of Christ is mediated by the Holy Spirit to the human spirit. When that takes place there is a new World, a new Reality, a new creation, defined by God's grace and freedom.

It is important to note that Loder has no desire to make a metaphysical statement as much as it is an epistemological one. Loder puts it this way:

[T]he main thrust of 1 Cor. 2 is not negative but overwhelmingly affirmative. It is not to denigrate *voûç* or mind but to proclaim what is in the *voûç Χριστοῦ*. It is here that one sees and participates in "what eye has not seen and ear has not heard." What has not entered into the human mind, God has prepared for those who love him. This is open to those whose spirits, in agreement with the Holy Spirit, search out the deep things of creation and of God, and whose relationship to God preserves the vital relationality that marks them as bearers of the image of God. To be endowed by the Holy Spirit with the *voûç Χριστοῦ* is not other-worldly, but it is instead to perceive and to behold *this* world *as if for the first time* because it is knowing the world through the Logos, the One through whom all things have been made. The natural order then becomes, remarkably, the creation of God in which every moment is sustained by God's grace alone.

Thus, by an *analogia spiritus*, Paul is declaring the radical transformation of all human horizons of reality. This is not designed to take the Corinthians out of the world but to restore them to their true humanity in the world through the Spirit of Christ. This is not

³³⁵George Hendry, *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology*, pp. 96-117.

³³⁶Loder, *The Logic of the Spirit*, pp. 34-35. Cf. Loder, "Incisions from a Two-Edged Sword: The Incarnation and the Soul/Spirit Relationship," pp. 151-173. "The aim of the incarnation cannot be to obliterate what is essential to human nature, otherwise the end term of the incarnation ("...and was made man") would lack definition. Rather, the incarnation must accommodate to human nature, transform it, and restore it to its origin in God. (p. 160)"

to reduce discord and dissension to the lowest common corporate denominator, but it is to raise humanity into its image status so that human spirit, by the power of the Holy Spirit, may become true to its potentially Christomorphic nature.³³⁷

What Loder is trying to identify and articulate is a pattern or process in which God redemptively re-orders our reality, of the way the "Spirit so radically expands the horizons of awareness, of space and time, of life and death. . . ."³³⁸ The way the Spirit does this is through its participation in the mind of Christ and mediating Christ to the believer.

Thus, at the heart of Paul's thinking about the Holy Spirit is the belief that the Holy Spirit makes *real the presence of Christ*. The Holy Spirit is given by the Father, and is the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit, proceeding also from the Son, continues the effective work of the Son in his absence. Yet, through the encounter with the Holy Spirit the apparent absence is overcome because the Spirit mediates the presence of the Risen Christ to the believer. The Holy Spirit operates *as* a power, *as* a force and, in this sense, the Holy Spirit is, as the Council of Constantinople decreed, "the Lord, the Life-giver." The life that the Spirit bestows is none other than the *zoe* life of God, the uncreated life that creates and sustains the created order. The Spirit, participating in the life of Christ and pointing the way toward Christ, confers the life of God that raised Jesus from the grave. In this sense, the power of God's love that raised Jesus from the grave is also operative in the Spirit who testifies to Christ and thus invites and allows the believer to indwell within the presence of the Risen Lord. This presence is not limited to an particular event, nor is it bound by a particular moment in space-time. The encounter is mediated by the Spirit who makes present the presence of the Risen Lord.³³⁹ That mediation posits a new orientation, granting a deeper and truer knowledge of self, world, void and the Holy, as Loder would argue. The Holy Spirit connects us to Christ and even as Christ indwells within the spirit of the believer.

It needs to be stressed that for Loder the Holy Spirit is neither an idea (contra Hegel), nor is the Spirit an impersonal force or energy field (contra Welker).³⁴⁰ The Spirit is understood classically as *person who* relationally participates in the life of the Trinity. Barth has taught us that when we talk about

³³⁷TKM, pp. 49-50. On Loder's logic as an "epistemological principle," see Elizabeth Frykberg's essay, cited above, p.24.

³³⁸TKM, p. 49.

³³⁹"The Spirit is none other than the fulfillment of the promise that God himself would once again be present with his people." This promised presence of God runs throughout the Old Testament and is realized in the New. See Gordon D. Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), pp. 9-22.

³⁴⁰G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of the Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). The identification of the Holy Spirit as "force field of divine power and presence," is, therefore, a particular weakness of Welker's pneumatology. He does not clearly show how the Holy Spirit participates in the transforming power of Christ. The Spirit is an impersonal power that creates "a force field of the Spirit," new environments for people to become members of. See Welker, pp. 228, 235-236, 239-241.

the revelation of God we are not given ideas *about* God, but experience the unveiling of God's identity and being. Revelation is "the Person of God speaking."³⁴¹ The inherent relationality of the Trinity, relating person-to-person, forces us to see that the experience of and with this God must also be inherently relational, that is personal. "The Early Greek Fathers caused a revolution in philosophical thinking when they created the Trinitarian confession. . . ," writes Paul Fiddes.

By equating the term *hypostasis* (meaning 'being' or 'reality') with 'person' (*prosopon*) they made clear that to be personal is not merely a quality added on to the nature of someone, but that to live in relationships is the very centre of [God's] essence. In our distorted, fallen existence we may begin by thinking first of someone's being, and then of the relationships in which he loves, works and plays; but for God, to be and to relate is the same. Thus if this God is fully present in Christ, regardless of the exact way we define the incarnation, Christ must be a fully relational reality. In Jesus Christ there is a new kind of human being, who could not and cannot exist except in relation to us.³⁴²

The task of the Holy Spirit is to bring us into the life of Christ, the Christ who by his life, death and resurrection has ushered us anew into the life of God. John Calvin (1509-1564) understood the dynamics of this pattern when he wrote that "until our minds are intent on the Spirit, Christ is in a manner unemployed because we view him coldly without ourselves and so at a distance from us."³⁴³ That which is brought close, therefore, is not an idea about Christ but the presence of Christ as mediated by the Holy Spirit.³⁴⁴

The Spirit-to-spirit or Divine-human relation (*analogia spiritus*) is understood by Loder as a

³⁴¹Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/1, pp. 132-136.

³⁴²Paul S. Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation: The Christian Idea of Atonement* (Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1989), p. 163. "God's nature is fully relational; he is ecstatic love, love that goes out beyond the self to another. The deepest reality is personal, and to be a person is not to be a self-contained individual but to live in relationships.(p. 163)"

³⁴³John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (III.i.3) This is the way Calvin understands Paul. "Paul shows the Spirit to be the inner teacher by whose effort the promise of salvation penetrates our minds, a promise that would otherwise only strike the air or beat upon the our ears."

³⁴⁴See Calvin's classic definition of the *unio mystica* in the *Institutes*, (III.xi.10): "Therefore, that joining together of Head and members, that indwelling of Christ in our hearts - in short, that mystical union - are accorded by us the highest degree of importance, so that Christ, having been made ours, makes us sharers with him in the gifts with which he has been endowed." Dennis E. Tamburello has shown that "Calvin is tireless in his stress on the Holy Spirit as the bond of a spiritual (yet absolutely real) union with Christ." *Union with Christ: John Calvin and the Mysticism of St. Bernard* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), p. 87, 87-88. In a letter to Peter Martyr Vermigli, 8th August 1555, Calvin wrote, "I know only this: that through the power of the Holy Spirit the life of heaven flows down to earth, for the flesh of Christ is neither life-giving in itself not can its effect reach us without the unmeasurable work of the Spirit. Thus it is the Spirit who makes Christ live in us, who sustains and nourishes us, who accomplishes everything on behalf of the Head." Cited in Tamburello, p. 87.

"asymmetric bipolar relational unity."³⁴⁵ In *The Knight's Move* he makes extensive use of what he calls "the strange loop model," and sees in it a basic pattern of relationality at work at both the macro and the micro levels of existence, and *perhaps* even providing a glimpse into the very mind of Christ. Loder's model is based on the work of Michael Polanyi, the theory of complementarity as advanced by Niels Bohr, and the discovery of the two-dimensional one-sided phenomenon known as the Möbius band.³⁴⁶ Let us unpack this.

The logic of complementary put forth by Niels Bohr is more correctly known as the "complementarity of contradictories." Bohr once observed, "[There] are two sorts of truth: triviality, where opposites are obviously absurd, and profound truths, recognized by the fact that the opposite is also true."³⁴⁷ With this insight, Bohr sought to account for his remarkable discovery that at the subatomic level the nature of light is simultaneously wave and particle. [Complementarity] is the logical relation between two descriptions or sets of concepts which, though mutually exclusive, are nevertheless both necessary for an exhaustive description of the situation."³⁴⁸

By "strange loop" Loder is referring to the discovery of the topological discovery made famous by M. C. Escher's woodcut, *Möbius Strip II (Red Ants)*. The strip is basically a band with a 180 degree twist in it (See Figure 1 below). More than an optical illusion, the directional flow of the lines of this continuous loop, with one surface and one edge formed by the twist has been used as an expression of non-duality, or more correctly, a bipolar relational unity. It was discovered by the German mathematician and astronomer, August Ferdinand Möbius (1790-1868) in 1858. The mathematical equation for the strip is known as The Möbius Transformation and has been used as a symbol for the unity of all polarities.³⁴⁹ This is how Loder uses it:

[T]he model presents the asymmetric bipolarity of relationality, suggesting its inherent unity. The apparent two sides or edges of the Möbius band represent the two poles in a dynamic interrelatedness which via a 180 degree twist brings the apparent duality into a paradoxical unity. This aspect of the model stresses our claim that the relationship is

³⁴⁵TKM, p. 57.

³⁴⁶Loder is indebted to Douglas Hofstadter's *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980) for his discussion of M. C. Escher's (1898-1970) use of the Möbius band in his paintings.

³⁴⁷Cited in Loder, p. 154.

³⁴⁸Max Jammer, *The Conceptual Development of Quantum Mechanics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), p. 348, cited in Loder, p. 155. In Bohr's Gifford Lectures (Edinburgh, 1949), he actually challenged theologians to make more use of the idea of complementarity. John Baillie, *The Sense of the Presence of God* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 217.

³⁴⁹Loder notes that August's grandson, Paul J. Möbius, was a "psychoneurologist frequently cited by Freud and others in discussions of the mind-body relationship. The Möbius strip was his model of the uniform interconnectedness of neurological and psychological realities." TKM, p. 40.

the reality.

In the model's bipolar-relational unity, a mutual reciprocity exists between the two levels: the upper level implies the lower level, and the lower level implies the upper level. However because the two levels are regulated by a form of marginal control principle sustained by the asymmetry of the relationship, there is a hierarchical aspect to this mutual reciprocity. This hierarchical interplay results in the "lower" level having a value and significance in an of itself, while being given its full meaning only in relation to the "higher" level which exerts a controlling or "molding" function.³⁵⁰

In *TKM*, Loder sees this relational model working in science and theology, especially in the work of Kierkegaard, Piaget, Einstein, and T. F. Torrance. But we will focus on the Spirit-spirit relationship.

The bipolarity with regard to Loder's pneumatology is the Holy Spirit (the upper level) and the human spirit (the lower level). To speak of one is to speak of the other. The levels are governed by what Loder calls "marginal control," a term used by Polanyi in *Personal Knowledge*. Epistemologically, personal knowledge, as Polanyi has described it, consists of a "differential integration" (Loder) of tacit (informal) knowledge and explicit (formal) knowledge. There is a *tacit* dimension to knowledge, which embraces a knowledge of the whole that redefines reality at the explicit level. "Explicit knowledge is dependent upon and shaped by the dimension of the tacit. The whole is always tacitly present and the parts explicit," Loder makes clear, "but the whole exercises marginal control over the parts. . . ."³⁵¹ Higher levels of knowing define lower levels. "For to regard a meaningless substratum as the ultimate reality of all things must lead to the conclusion that all things are meaningless. We can avoid this conclusion only if we acknowledge instead that the deepest reality is possessed by higher things that are least tangible."³⁵² It is important to observe that Loder remains consistent in creating a space for the self. The relation of higher to lower grants "value and significance" to the human spirit. Yet, the human spirit

³⁵⁰*TKM*, p. 57.

³⁵¹Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge, The Tacit Dimension*; *TKM*, p. 41-41. Loder, "Incisions from a Two-Edged Sword: The Incarnation and the Soul/Spirit Relationship," p. 163-164. All knowing has a tacit dimension to it, but it is never known explicitly nor implicitly. At the center of his thought is the idea, "We know more than we can tell." Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (New York: Doubleday, 1967), p. 4.

³⁵²Concerning Polanyi's many-leveled world Drusilla Scott writes, "All the levels are real; the higher levels built from the lower by using the 'play' that is left free in the operation of the lower level laws. The higher levels, it is true, are at the mercy of the lower, in that the lower levels may break free from the control of the higher. With all living creatures they will do so eventually in death. But the higher levels are not less real, indeed they are more so, by Polanyi's definition of reality, since they are more meaningful, more attractive of our interest because of the potentiality of still undiscovered implications in them. This structure of levels can be seen in everything connected with life, most of all in man, his consciousness, his skills, his powers of reasoning and creating, and his continuing vision of yet higher levels to explore and achieve." Drusilla Scott, *Everyman Revived: The Common Sense of Michael Polanyi*, Foreword by Lesslie Newbigin (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), pp. 122-12; Michael Polanyi, "On the Modern Mind" printed in *Encounter* 24 (1965), p.4, quoted in Scott, p. 69.

only comes to see itself as spirit when defined by through its relationship with the Holy Spirit. The human spirit at the lower level is dependent upon the Holy Spirit (hence the asymmetry of the relationship). The self can only know itself through an encounter with the self-relationality of God in the Spirit. Here, Loder incorporates Pannenberg's discussion of exocentricity and ecstasis.³⁵³ Just as no organism has the power within itself to sustain itself but is dependent upon another environment for life, so too, the human spirit is a response of the organism to a power that "seizes it and, by lifting it up beyond itself, the organism is inspired with creative life."³⁵⁴ The Spirit is both within and beyond the self.

Loder understands the human spirit as a self-relationality (Kierkegaard) and views the Holy Spirit as a self-relationship within the Trinity. Thus the logic of the Holy Spirit accommodates to the logic of the human spirit. So that "the accommodation aspect of the incarnation [drawing from Hendry] is accomplished spiritually as the relationality between Holy Spirit and human spirit recapitulates in human experience the relationality between the divine and the human in the nature of Christ. In other words, the relationality that pertains to the ultimate bipolar nature of Christ is experienced proximately in a bipolar relationship that pertains when our spirits testify with the Divine Spirit that we are the children of God (Romans 8:16)."³⁵⁵ When this occurs one undergoes conviction, transformation.

To be convicted means one has encountered the Holy Spirit as *Spiritus Creator* - the creative Spirit. This, too, is a designation that was very important in Loder's life and thought, especially after 1970. He borrows and adopts it from Regin Prenter's weighty, exhaustive study of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in Martin Luther's (1483-1546) theology, entitled *Spiritus Creator*. Prenter's work was of inestimable value to Loder - so much so that he seems to have adopted it completely, uncritically.

Prenter wants to establish Luther's theology of the Holy Spirit as an essential component of his theology.³⁵⁶ At the center of Luther's theology of the Spirit is a concrete realism that would have easily

³⁵³F. LeRon Shults sees Loder & Neidhardt's relational model as a helpful heuristic to substantiate the value of Pannenberg's theology, even as Pannenberg's work offers a good example of the kind of interdisciplinary work that Loder and Neidhardt advocate. *The Postfoundationalist Task of Theology: Wolfhart Pannenberg and the New Theological Rationality*. Foreword by Wolfhart Pannenberg (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 21, 166, 206-210, 238, 240.

³⁵⁴Wolfhart Pannenberg, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), pp. 44ff. Loder, p. 158. Cf. Loder's favorable review of this volume, primarily due to the personal-relational aspects of Pannenberg's thought. Summarizing Pannenberg, Loder writes, "the biblical God is personal in will and action and as revealed in Jesus Christ. . . ." The "eternal act of the Son's differentiation . . . [from God] becomes[s] the generative principle of otherness from which new creatures come forth. This kenotic view of Christ leads into a reconstruction of the doctrine of the Spirit understood as the dynamic principle of all life, not just new life." *Theology Today*, 49(1993): 557-560

³⁵⁵Loder, p. 161.

³⁵⁶This against Rudolf Otto's *Die Anschauung vom Heiligen Geiste bei Luther* (Göttingen, 1898). Regin Prenter, *Spiritus Creator* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 200).

resonated with Loder. Speaking of Luther, Prenter writes, "Without the work of the Spirit, Christ is not a redeeming reality. Without the work of the Spirit, Christ remains an example and faith a historical faith."³⁵⁷ The work of the Spirit is to mediate the *present* presence of Christ. The faith is not an historical fact that is translated into the present, but a reality here-and-now experience. Luther's realism, Prenter suggests, is a dramatic break with the medieval tradition of *caritas* idealism with its *imitatio* piety.³⁵⁸ While Luther breaks with the medievalists, Prenter suggests that a Kantian interpretation of Luther continues to distort what Luther was trying to establish, where "the idea of the Spirit is considered closely related to the idealistic idea of the continuity between man's highest spiritual nature and the center of existence. . . ."³⁵⁹ Luther believed, says Prenter, that "the experience of faith is a true *experience*. In the man in whom the experience of faith by the witness of the Spirit is produced, there is no doubt that he is face to face with reality, yes, face to face with a reality which is over and above all other reality. Therefore Luther does not hesitate to say that he who believes in Christ shall feel the Holy Spirit in himself."³⁶⁰

The feeling that one experiences begins with inner conflict. "The inner conflict. . . is that test which proves whether faith and its objects were just a fancy, an imaginary affair, or reality. That which is able to stand the fiery test of inner conflict is confirmed as reality and thus is experienced."³⁶¹ It involves a shattering of reality in which one is compelled "to test" what is real and what is not, to know what is or is not the true object of faith. The "test of inner conflict is given only by the Holy Spirit," according to Luther.³⁶² "Experience means that the intercession of the Spirit for us proves that the Christ, in whom we take refuge and with whom we are made to conform in the groanings that cannot be uttered, is a reality and not a dream."³⁶³ The conflict is caused when the Holy Spirit engages the human spirit. This must take place because without "this experience given by the Holy Spirit the whole content of the gospel remains in the sphere of history and the ideal. The whole thing is then just an idea, just words

³⁵⁷Prenter, p. 54.

³⁵⁸Prenter, p. 179.

³⁵⁹Prenter, p. 179.

³⁶⁰Prenter, p. 57. Italics in the text. Prenter sees the "Spirit's activity in the individual soul," thereby calling our attention to be open to a "greater presence" of the Spirit "in the church." Michael O'Carroll, *Veni Creator Spiritus: A Theological Encyclopedia of the Holy Spirit* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990).

³⁶¹Prenter, p. 56.

³⁶²Prenter, p. 56.

³⁶³Prenter, p. 57.

and pictures, just the recollection of a distant past, at best an example which may be imitated."³⁶⁴ But Jesus Christ is not merely an example, contends Luther, Prenter, and Loder, but a person to be encountered in the present through the Holy Spirit. And when that occurs, something new is experienced.

Prenter shows us that in Luther's theology before the Spirit provides comfort, the Spirit comes to expose and thereby create the inherent conflict within the self. The "Spirit is interpellator and consoler." But consolation cannot take place without first encountering the source of alienation from God and this knowledge is painful to bear. The "comfort of the Spirit is identical with his creative and life-giving work. The Spirit knows no other form for comfort than the one in which man is brought through death into life." This is because, as Loder would stress and as we have seen, "The Spirit does not comfort by stopping inner conflict midway but by raising to new life the man who is overcome by death. Thus sanctification is simply another expression for the creative work of the Spirit."³⁶⁵

The movement of the Spirit cannot deny reality, but as agent of truth forces the believer to confront the truth in all its brutality. When the Spirit moves in a person's life there will inevitably be conflict because in the encounter one becomes conscious of one's alienation from God. This is also what took place on the cross, a demonstration of the brutality of humanity in its alienation from itself and from God. The movement of the Spirit that participated in the alienation of the cross continues to move, as Prenter put it, "under the burden of the cross." This means that the movement of the Spirit must be discerned in the most unlikely places - like a cross or wherever humanity is crucifying itself. He continues:

But in this strange garb, which no one would surmise to be God's reality because it resembles the very opposite, God's whole reality is found in the midst of our distress. It is a creation out of nothing. The message about the creative Spirit shows us God on the way to distant man, who is lost in sin and death, in order constantly to create new life out of nothing, life out of death. Therefore God must show himself in a manner which is in contrast to every metaphysical concept of God. Whatever metaphysics may attribute to God - such as his remoteness, his "blessedness," his immovability, his impassibility - is constantly disavowed by the creative Spirit who is present in the midst of the fury of death and hell where God, if he is "good," cannot be present (except in all his gifts and his influence). There he struggles and suffers with lost man and he conquers in a way in which he the blessed, impassive, eternally self-sufficient, "God cannot struggle at all and suffer."³⁶⁶

³⁶⁴Prenter, p. 58.

³⁶⁵Prenter, p. 186.

³⁶⁶Prenter, p. 192. Cf. Barth's view that the encounter with God as "alien factor," effects a "disturbance," - and "irresistible" and "invincible" one. (CD IV/2: 527). Barth also uses the language of "invasion" and "attack" (CD IV/2: 523, 543). Lee writes, "The Kingdom of God not only 'confronts, contradicts, and opposes' humanity, grace comes upon Christians in the form of a 'great onslaught' (CD IV/2: 543). It is God's '*coup d'etat*,' His revolution, that '*breaks*' (544), '*cuts across*' (530), and '*radically assails*' (531) them." Lee, "The Holy Spirit and Human Agency," p. 179. Italics in the text.

The Spirit participated in the work of God on the cross in Jesus Christ and the Spirit continues to work those places of alienation, abandonment, isolation, pain, and even death. The Spirit's presence thus exposes the power of the void, to use Loder's term, in order to ensure that the void does not have the last word.

But in order to experience the Holy, the void must be embraced and this can only be done through the power of the Holy Spirit who both convicts and transforms. The *Spiritus Creator* wants us to face the nothingness, yet incorporate into itself in such a way that it yields an ontological gain for the believer. This is why for Loder, the Christian experience begins with conflict. Conflict is the language of conviction. And once the individual has been convicted, the Holy Spirit will bring one through the sequence to a point of resolution. But resolution cannot be achieved without the work of the Holy Spirit and without confronting nothingness. This is why before the Christian gospel can become meaningful, it first result in conflict - inner conflict as the self is force to confront the nothingness inherent to being.

This is also why Loder would claim, "To have the gospel come to us with meaning is to be thrown into a conflict of immense proportions. The Spirit of Holiness makes us sinners, the enlightenment makes us blind; the dimension of the Holy calls into play the threats of evil, annihilation and damnation. The self, its community, and its world are exposed as alienated from each other and within themselves"... and ultimately with God.³⁶⁷

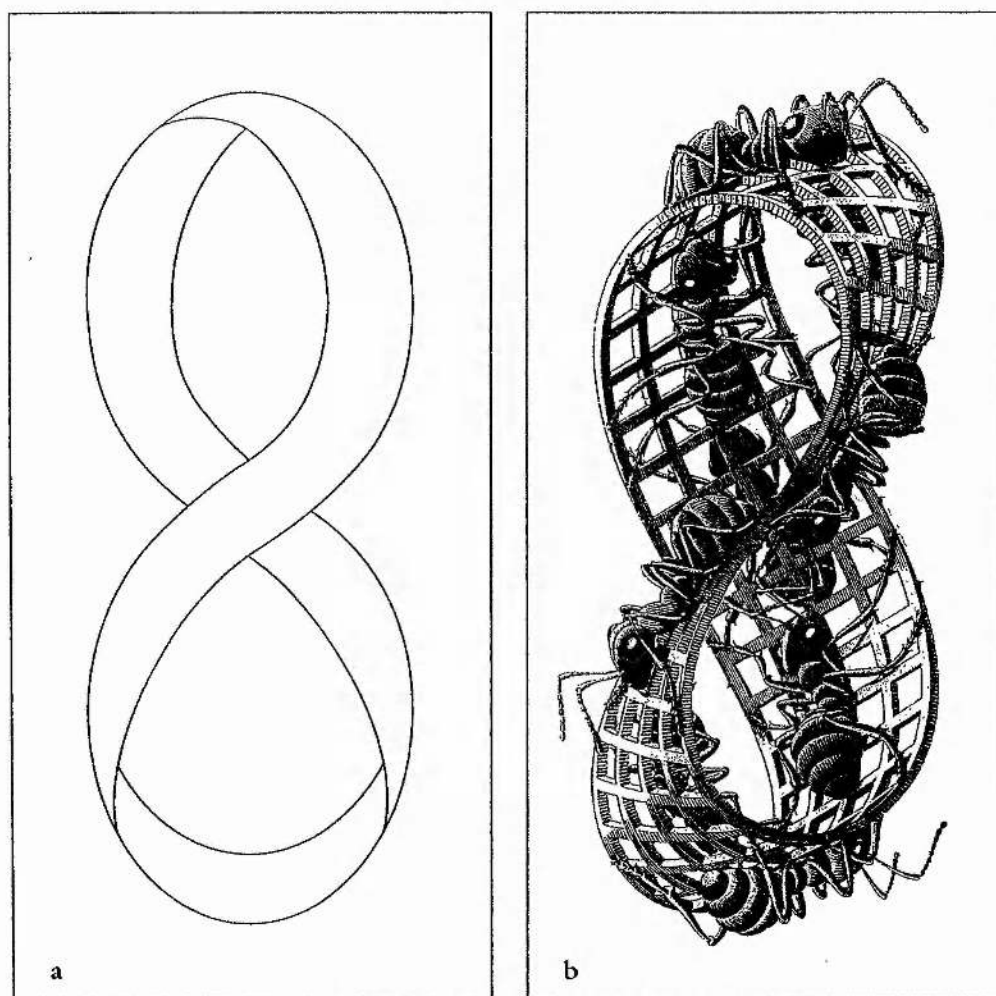
X. Conclusion

In this chapter we have analyzed the primary themes and influences upon Loder's work that cluster around what I have termed his relational phenomenological pneumatology. When the Holy Spirit encounters the human spirit and calls it to true life, the logic of transformation that enables the ego to be grounded in something other than the drives of self-protection and self-destruction, then that life will model the pattern of the life of Christ. In this sense the relationship will be Christomorphic, a pattern of mortification and vivification after the pattern of Christ. All of this is done in and through and for humanity in order for humanity to regain its true identity as a child of God. The result is a life that is four-dimensionally grounded in the Spirit that is able to participate redemptively in a world that Christ died to save. This is the work of sanctification: a pattern of rehumanization through which the New Humanity of Christ enjoins the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in the work of transformation. Thus, conviction results in a reorientation to reality and a new way of living within the World as mediated by the spiritual presence of Christ. Reality, itself, becomes a place of encounter where one experiences the presence of Christ in space-time. And in that Reality one lives a life that is completely unique. In the next chapter we will explore the nature of this reality using Loder's framework with regards to the question of history and historical existence. In the final chapter will examined the wider implications

³⁶⁷Loder, "Transformation in Christian Education," p. 18.

of Loder's thinking for the way we conceive and experience the Christian life.

Figure 1: From *The Knight's Move*, p. 41.



Chapter Three

Conviction and the Pneumatically Relativized Spatio-Temporal World

"Probably the most painful human experience is nothingness in its many forms (loneliness, meaningless, death). No one overcomes this by a defensive or emergent competencies of the ego. This is because the ego is constructed on the principle that absences, although a necessary part of existence, are to be denied and inflicted on the environment through objectification and control, but, from the egoistic standpoint, if possible they are to be 'managed,' not embraced and suffered through. The constructive aspects of the ego, creative in themselves, are nevertheless built on its defensive structure, and they presupposed negation throughout the ego's valiant, prepossessing concern for survival and long-term satisfaction."

James E. Loder
The Transforming Moment

In this chapter I will offer a further elaboration of Loder's vision of the Christian life by bringing it to bear upon an area of thinking not usually associated with his work – a theological consideration of the nature of historical existence as a relational reality. Such a reading, I would argue, is implicit to his convictional theology. My intention here is to highlight an aspect of Loder's work that has been overlooked and in doing so suggest some wider implications of this thought. This attempt makes a unique contribution to Loder scholarship because no one to my knowledge has identified the enormous contributions he makes in helping us redefine the relationship between history and faith, the thorny issues which have plagued the Western church from its inception, especially since the seventeenth century. In order to see this, we will explore what I think are the early origins of historical consciousness in the early church. In doing so, however, my intent here is *not* to get bogged down in the miry muck of the faith-history debate (although a reasonably firm grasp of these issues lies behind our discussion). Instead, my purpose here with regards to historical existence is to show: First, *that Loder's convictional theology exposes submerged conflicts and patterns of negation operating in human thought with regard to its use of "history" and the way these maladaptive patterns have inflicted considerable damage upon the life of the church;* second, *to show that Loder's understanding of the Christian life existing in a pneumatically radicalized spatio-temporal reality has the potential to negate these negations, thus providing a well-needed corrective and new framework for articulating the characteristics of the Christian life.*

Before we proceed, let me state that by historical existence I mean the characteristics of a life that is thoroughly historical, that is fully cognizant of its contingency and its embeddedness within the nexus of space and time (or more correctly in a post-Einsteinian view, space-time). Historical existence becomes a synonym for the Christian life, for as Loder has argued and as we have seen, to be in Christ means that one is both given a new reality and placed firmly in that reality. *That* reality, to borrow from

Wolfhart Pannenberg, is history, is "reality in its totality."¹ As Loder often affirmed (quoting Luther), the Convictor "fire[s] one into the world with a velocity not his own."² This new four-dimensional reality is not a flight from history, but the experience of newness within a historical context or environment (World). It is within the structures of space-time, the totality of reality, we live and move and have our being. Thus, how we think about historical existence has profound implications for the way we live the Christian life.

I. Preliminary Considerations of the Term "History"

Let us first begin with the acknowledgment that the word "history" is notoriously difficult to define. In his essay "Hegel and Historiography (1928)," José Ortega Y Gasset (1883-1955) coined a new term, "historiology" - by which he meant not the study of the past, but the study of *history* itself, a study of the divergent meanings of this term generated over the last four hundred years.³ "History" can refer to everything that once was present is now placed into the container of the past. It can refer to the study of the past, what Johan Huizinga calls "the impulse toward the past."⁴ It can also be viewed as a reified force - *History* - understood as an objective, external idea that is working itself out through human beings. This approach is often associated with Georg Hegel's (1770-1831) view that history is the setting for the unfolding and fulfillment of the *Geist*.⁵ History as constituted by an inexorable drive towards the culmination of an idea or a state of being is grounded in some Christian views of history as a *Heilsgeschichte*, of God achieving salvation for humanity in and through history.⁶ By understanding the patterns, narratives or systems of history's movement leads potentially to wisdom, thus improving

¹Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Redemptive Event and History," *Basic Questions in Theology, Volume I*, trans. George H. Kehim (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), p. 21. See also *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985), pp. 485ff.

²James E. Loder, "Creativity In and Beyond Human Development," in Gloria Durka and Joanmarie Smith, *Aesthetic Dimensions of Religious Education* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), p. 232.

³John T. Graham, *The Theory of History in Ortega Y Gasset: "The Dawn of Historical Reason,"* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1997).

⁴Johan Huizinga, *Men and Ideas: History, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance*. trans. James S. Holmes and Hans van Marle (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

⁵Georg Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, Introduction by C. J. Friedrich. Prefaces by Charles Hegel and the translator, J. Sibree (New York: Dover Publications, 1956). More recently this view can be seen in Francis Fukayama's *The End of History and the Last Man* makes the claim that the triumph of liberal democracy is "the end point of mankind's ideological evolution," thus bringing about "the end of history." (New York: Avon Books, 1993), p. xi.

⁶Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).

humankind by assisting people to make better choices.⁷ As a result, history can have a didactic or pedagogical quality to help heed George Santayana's (1863-1952) warning that those who forget history are condemned to repeat it.

Paradigmatically, "history" has been defined as the *res gestae*, the totality of events, the human actuality that shapes reality and as *historia rerum gestarum*, the account or report of these events. The *res gestae* consists of the objective, external occurrences of temporal reality. The *historia rerum gestarum* refers to the subjective chronicle or narrative of what took place. History can thus be an idea or "thing," possessing an objective reality. Or history can be the narrative of one's experience in space-time, encountering that objective reality as the phenomenon of history experienced. This demarcation rests upon making a clean distinction between objectivity and subjectivity, a dualism that has plagued philosophical and theological considerations of history for centuries.⁸ It has proved extremely problematic due to the fact that the *object* of faith for the Christian is not a thing, but a *subject*, is the person Jesus Christ who, according to the confessions of the church and as *subjectively* appropriated in the faith-life of millions, remains both *personally* and *historically present*. As we have seen, Loder wants to overcome all dualisms; his work addresses this epistemological crisis by suggesting a theory of knowledge which accounts for precisely *this* kind of faith experience.

For what if the experience of objective reality is somehow constituted and thereby shaped by the way one tells or forms the narrative of historical experience? If the knower is involved in what is known (Polanyi), then history (both as idea and phenomenon) becomes like an idol that one fashions, invests with extraordinary interpretative power to mediate meaning, and then worships; all the while forgetting its origin as a human construct. If this is so, then it begs the question whether history can be anything at all. Closer to our concerns, theologically it also raises considerable doubts about the ability of historical knowledge to serve as a foundation for faith unless it is transformed by the Spiritual Presence of Christ.

II. History as a Human Construct

In the preceding chapters we identified the personalist-relational, interactionist, and constructivist aspects of Loder's thought. In his discussion of the "anthropic principle" or the "human factor" he reminds us that "what we know and understand about the universe is in some respect already a part of how we have developed." That is, the "universe we have got our heads into is in some respects

⁷Cf. Will and Ariel Durant, *The Lessons of History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968).

⁸James Brown, *Subject and Object in Modern Theology* (New York: Macmillan, 1955).

already in our heads to begin with.”⁹ The intelligence of the universe mirrors human intelligence, Loder suggests; they mirror one another, “not only in respect of what they are in themselves (which is why mathematics works) but also in their openness to what is altogether beyond them (which is why human development and the universe must be studied theologically). The human mind is adapted to the rational structures and laws of the universe, and the universe is so coordinated with the developing mind of persons that via the anthropic principle we must recognize that we are caught up in an unbounded range of relational intelligibility.”¹⁰ Even though our knowledge and our capacity to mirror the universe is imperfect, this does not deny the “inner logic” of the human spirit “its creative drive to construct coherence and remain open to ultimacy, its irrepressible self-transcendence and transformational potential, its revulsion at confusion and its discovery of order in chaos: all these characteristics working to disclose the structures, patterns, and power hidden in the universe and in human nature point toward God the Creator.”¹¹ The “creative drive” of the human spirit is operative in all forms of knowing, wherever the human spirit strives after knowledge and constructs a reality that discovers order in chaos.

This same creative drive, I would argue, is active when we approach a consideration of history. R. G. Collingwood (1889-1943) identified the thoroughgoing epistemological enterprise of the historian as representation. Because an event, thought, or person is no longer present the historian engages in a sophisticated process of retrieval. What is recovered, in Collingwood’s estimation, is not the event, thought, or person *per se*, but the thought that leads to action. “Historical knowledge is the knowledge of what mind has done in the past, and at the same time it is the redoing of this, the perpetuation of past acts in the present.”¹² History is more than just a study of the past or an objective interpretation of “just the facts.”¹³ The historian engages in “a legitimate historical construction,” which is not only creative,

⁹LS, p. 8. Loder sees the “most staggering aspect” of existence is “the transcending human spirit generating and inspiring human intelligence. The intelligent human mind that can begin to grasp the immense scope of this reality, knows that it grasps it, and is able, at least in part, to make it intelligible, transcend all that it knows”. . .moving “in all directions [on both a micro and macro level].” LS, p. 7.

¹⁰LS, p. 9. Loder quotes T. F. Torrance, “Not only is the universe the home of humankind, but the personal nature of humankind belongs to the nature of nature, and we are thereby called to recognize that the universe owes its existence, nature and structure to a personal Author infinitely greater than we can ever conceived - to God the Creator.” This is from a lecture given at Princeton Theological Seminary (March, 1990), “The Transcendental Role of Wisdom in Science.”

¹¹LS, p. 10.

¹²R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 218. Cf. Benedetto Croce (1866-1952), *The Theory and History of Historiography* (1916) where he sees historical reconstruction as the re-creation of past experience in the mind of the historian. “All history is history of thought.” “All history is contemporary history.”

¹³Trevor Hart, *Faith Thinking: The Dynamics of Christian Theology* (London: SPCK, 1995), pp. 48ff.

but highly dependent upon the power of the imagination. "The imagination. . . operating not capriciously as fancy but in its *a priori* form, does the entire work of historical construction."¹⁴ The authority of the interpretation is not contingent upon the facts, *per se*, but what is "done" with them by examining sense-data and determining what is inferred from the facts. "The web of imaginative construction," Collingwood submits, "is something far more solid and powerful than we have hitherto realized."¹⁵

Thus, to a considerable degree it can be said that history (as both idea and phenomenon) is included as one of the many creative expressions of the human spirit. Only human beings write history, think historically, raise historical questions, are conscious of their historicity, and are aware of their movement through space-time. For example, the emergence of historical consciousness, of a *sensus historicus* in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is a response to the increasingly technological and scientific world view that devalued the significance of the person. It denotes a massive shift in consciousness in which humanity becomes aware of change and development, conscious of the malleability of human existence which summons from deep within the self a desire to find meaning in the flow of historical experience, and to find order within the chaos of time.¹⁶ The renown German historian, Jacob Burckhardt (1818-1897) said, "The essence of history is change." More specifically, it is change as experienced by individuals, "man suffering, striving, doing, as he is and was and ever shall be."¹⁷ As people suffer, strive, do, and then contemplate on experience, historical images begin to appear. These images then mediate reality. "After all, our historical pictures are, for the most part, pure constructions," J. T. Fraser argues. "Indeed, they are mere reflections of ourselves."¹⁸ Marc Bloch (1886-1944) echoes this same sentiment when he said that "history is the science of men in time."¹⁹ Karl Marx (1818-1883) was even more explicit in this regard. "*History* does nothing, it 'possesses no

¹⁴Collingwood, p. 241.

¹⁵Collingwood, p. 244.

¹⁶Maurice Mandelbaum, *History, Man, & Reason: A Study in Nineteenth Century Thought* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971), pp. 142ff. Alan Richardson, *History: Sacred and Profane* (London: SCM Press, 1964). Donald R. Kelley, ed. *Versions of History from Antiquity to the Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991). Friedrich Meineke (1862-1954) held that the development of the historical sense was "the greatest spiritual revolution which Western thought had undergone." Cited in John Lukacs, *Historical Consciousness or the Remembered Past* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 18.

¹⁷Jacob Burckhardt, *Reflections on History*. Introduction by Gottfried Dietze; trans. M. D. Hottinger (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Classics, 1979), p. 35.

¹⁸J. T. Fraser, *Of Time, Passion, and Knowledge: Reflections on the Strategy of Existence*, second edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 41ff.

¹⁹Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, trans. Peter Putnam (New York: Vintage Books, 1953), p. 27.

immense wealth,' it 'wages *no* battles,'" he said. "It is man, real living man, that does all that, that possesses and fights; 'history' is not a person apart, using man as a means for its own particular aims; history is *nothing but* the activity of man pursuing his aims."²⁰ John McIntyre, for example, argued that theologically, a doctrine of history should be understood as a corollary to a doctrine of humanity.²¹ Phenomenologically, Hans-Georg Gadamer has argued more recently that, "Historical consciousness is a mode of self-knowledge."²² Paul Ricoeur (b. 1913) reinforces this claim by pointing out that the objectivity of the historian is gained through a subjective "work of methodical activity," engaging the past not to restore things "as they happened," but to reconstruct and recompose the past in a present sequence. All of this is done without forgetting that "the object of history is the human subject itself."²³ I would argue that in the pursuit of all things historical is the drive to make a claim for the personal.

Thus we see that history as an epistemological construct is really knowledge of humanity, humanity living and striving after meaning; it is the present epistemological strategy of the human knower seeking to order reality.²⁴ The same point was made theologically by John Baillie (1886-1960) who said our experience of history is actually a present endeavor, what he called a "mediated immediacy." Baillie credits Friedrich Gogarten with this insight: "The problem of history is fundamentally the problem of presentness of the past." Something past has become present and thus,

²⁰Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975), p. iv, 93. Italics in the text.

²¹John McIntyre, *The Christian Doctrine of History* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1957), pp. 10-11.

²²Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Second, Revised Edition, Translation revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1999), p. 235.

²³Paul Ricoeur, *History and Truth*, Translated, with an Introduction by Charles A. Kelbley (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1965), p.40. Ricoeur is alluding to Leopold von Ranke's (1795-1886) imperative that historians "*simply show how it really was (wie es eigentlich gewesen)*." His imperative shaped the historiography traditions of German, British, and French historians for three generations. See Leopold von Ranke, *The Theory and Practice of History*, Edited with an Introduction and New Translation by George Iggers and Konrad von Moltke (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill 1973). The *wie es eigentlich gewesen*, it should be noted, was not viewed as a purely factual reconstruction of the past but an attempt to depict that which was "characteristic, essential" (p. ix). The goal, however, was to be objective. Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835) summarizes this push for objectivity in his "On the Historian's Task" (1821), "The historian's task is to present what actually happened. The more purely and completely he achieves this, the more perfectly has he solved his problem" (p. 5). The historian here is passive, receptive, and simply re-presents only that which is discovered, but is not active or creative in the process (p. 5).

²⁴Collingwood, p. 3.

"History is something that happens in the present."²⁵ It is these strategies, constructions, patterns, or structures of human knowledge that concern me, for they shape what we mean by this word; but not merely the word, they shape the way we talk about and experience this reality.

Therefore, we can affirm theologically that when we are dealing with history (again, whether as idea or phenomenon) we are given, Loder believed, "the best approach to understanding human reality in its fullness."²⁶ In the spring of 1992, Loder taught a doctoral seminar entitled "Theology and the Human Sciences." One of the major texts for the course was Pannenberg's, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, with an entire class session reserved for a discussion of the last chapter, "Human Beings and History," thus illustrating Loder's interest in the historical expression of convictional life. From the entire chapter, Loder selects three quotes from Pannenberg which he deemed of particular importance. The first:

Human life, whether it is the life space or the individual or the large story of peoples and states, takes concrete form in history. When compared with this concreteness, the approaches taken in human biology, sociology, and psychology show themselves to be only abstract approximations to human reality. History is the *principium individuationis* ("principle of individuation") in the life of both individuals and of peoples and cultures. It is true, of course, that a historical account is still selective and therefore fails to convey the full richness of concrete life. Nonetheless, of all the disciplines that have the human being for their subject, the science of history and historiography comes closest to grasping human reality as it is experienced.²⁷

The second:

The fulfillment that is the goal of human beings in history transcends the limits of every historical present and rejects the present, for while the present too may seem to show a likeness to an everlasting order of things, it deserves, from another viewpoint, to pass away.²⁸

With the third reference being: "The unfinished character of the historical process challenges the claim of either the philosopher of history or the historian to grasp the whole of reality."²⁹ These quotes draw our attention to the inherently human dimensions of the historical.

But they also point to an idea that was extremely important to Loder and perhaps the reason why

²⁵Friedrich Gogarten, *Ich Glaube an den Dreieinigen Gott* (1926) cited in John Baillie, *Our Knowledge of God* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), pp. 188-189. The context of Baillie's discussion is that aspect of the Christian life in which one actually experiences the presence of Christ *hic et nunc*.

²⁶From a transcription of Loder's doctoral seminar, "Theology and the Human Sciences," recorded by Dr. Dana Wright, Princeton Theological Seminary, 27th April 1992.

²⁷Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, p. 485.

²⁸Pannenberg, p. 486.

²⁹Pannenberg, p. 486.

Pannenberg had such an attraction for him: *Historical existence is an open-ended affair*. With the drive to transcend the present, reaching into the future becomes the foundation for hope. As the self reaches forward, the present, as well as the past "pass away" and have no constitutive value. The "unfinished" quality of being means that no one has the ability to definitively "grasp" or explain this reality. We are continually dependent upon other sources to mediate that meaning, such as the future - or as we shall see for Loder, the Spirit. How is it possible to grasp that of which one is a part? No one has the ability to stand outside the flow of time. Thus Loder raises these questions in the seminar:

What is the problem of history? Why do we write history and who writes it and when they do write it [history] do they change it? How can you write history if everything changes? And how can you write history without talking about change? You have both continuity and discontinuity. . . . How do we focus upon this question in terms of Spirit?³⁰

We will take up these questions throughout this chapter.

III. The Search for Order and Meaning

In this regard, Loder's approach is very similar to the view advanced by the philosopher of history, Eric Voegelin (1901-1985). While there is no mention of Voegelin in any of his publications, I know personally that Loder was conversant with Voegelin's multi-volume work *Order and History* and valued his approach to history. Voegelin theorized that history is the account of humanity ordering the past; it is a process of configuration.³¹ "What happens 'in' history," Voegelin suggests, "is the very process of differentiating consciousness that constitutes history."³² For Voegelin, history is "the unfolding of a pattern of meaning in time." It is "a process of increasingly differentiated insight into the order of being in which man participates by his existence."³³ If history is really humanity writ large, then this has to be taken into account when we attempt to talk theologically about historical existence. Loder thus incorporates and complements Voegelin's viewpoint by theologically discerning that the human spirit is also searching after patterns of meaning, an ultimate meaning which can only be mediated by the Holy Spirit, who also aspires to give it.

Like Voegelin, Loder establishes an experiential methodology in which experience is valued as

³⁰Seminar transcript.

³¹Eric Voegelin, "Configurations in History," *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, Volume Twelve - Published Essays, 1966-1985*, Edited with an Introduction by Ellis Sandoz (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), pp. 95-114.

³²Eric Voegelin, *Order and History, Volume 4: The Ecumenic Age* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), p. 332. See also *Anamnesis*. Translated and Edited by Gerhart Niemeyer (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966).

³³*Order and History*, 4:11. Eugene Webb, *Eric Voegelin: Philosophy of History* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1981).

a starting point for truth. As we have seen, Loder's theories are the result of intentionally indwelling moments of conviction. For Voegelin, theology is also rooted in human experience. Theory and praxis are not antithetical, but stand in a dialectical relationship that deepens our capacity to experience truth. Experience can thus be luminous for consciousness, providing what Voegelin called "leaps in being," epochal advances in consciousness.³⁴ But experience is more than just sense-perception, it consists of human drives, desires, pulls, always searching forward to recover a loss of meaning. What the human spirit leaves in its wake is the "stuff" of history. Voegelin refers to this as "derailments," "deformation of character," "egophony," (the destructive obsessions of the ego), of "pathologies of the psyche."³⁵ Thus what the psyche or spirit discovers when it searches after meaning is the presence of chaos that exists underneath all forms of knowledge. The human spirit strives for transcendence, but discovers its limits. It is attracted toward an inexhaustible mystery, yet it cannot be objectified or grasped and any attempt yields further frustration. This is what Voegelin called the "In-Between," so that "all forms of pneumopathology are strategies for repressing the inevitable tension of existence in the In-Between."³⁶

In this drive for meaning Voegelin pays close attention to the dynamics of religious experience, because it is in this dimension that one finds the strongest demonstration of humanity's struggle for order.³⁷ Of particular interest are religious experiences which are pneumopathologies (not unlike what Loder demonstrated in his work on Freud and Kierkegaard). Voegelin makes a distinction between the noetic (reason) and the pneumatic (spirit or revelation). "The structure of a theophanic experience reaches from a pneumatic center to a noetic periphery."³⁸ Thus before history and philosophy there is first "the primary experience of the order of the world."³⁹ It is this shift from the pneumatic to the noetic that Voegelin sees as a maladaptive response that removes or cuts one off from the generating source of the "originating experience." This is because very often the originating experience does not resolve the inherent tension in meaning, but actually *heightens* it.

The similarity with Loder's theories of convictional knowing and creativity are evident. Even

³⁴Voegelin, *Order and History*, I: 10 cited in John Kirby & William M. Thompson, ed. *Voegelin and the Theologian: Ten Studies in Interpretation* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1983). This resonates with Loder's belief that the logic of transformation is in and beyond patterns of socialization.

³⁵Kirby & Thompson, p. 15.

³⁶Kirby & Thompson, pp. 8, 15.

³⁷Kirby & Thompson, p. 7.

³⁸*Order and History*, IV: 244 cited in Kirby & Thompson, p. 10.

³⁹Voegelin cited in Paul Grimley Kuntz, "Voegelin's Experience of Disorder Out of Order and Vision of Order Out of Disorder: A Philosophic Meditation on His Theory of Order-Disorder," in Ellis Sandoz, ed. *Eric Voegelin's Significance for the Modern Mind* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana University Press, 1991), p. 111.

though the pneumatic experience offers the deepest needs of the human spirit and resolves the existential anxiety of being, the implications of living *from* that experience become a threat because one's orientation to the world is forever changed. Because this tension is too great the ego cuts itself off from the pneumatic. The tension or chaos threatens being itself, and yet only through an engagement with chaos (Loder = void) can the meaning be achieved. A theophanic experience offers what the human spirit desires: a "recapturing of reality."⁴⁰ As a result Voegelin voices a loud caution to theologians who are more comfortable talking about the noetic and ignoring the pneumatic. "When we speak of theology confronting the world religions we must know what we are talking about . . . It is better to start right from the beginning from the experiences which engendered philosophical symbols before they became deformed into metaphysical dogmas."⁴¹ To dwell in the realm of the noetic and thereby ignore the generative power of the pneumatic is a symptom of pneumapathology. Likewise, Loder wants to make sure that all theological considerations (including his own) do not become substitutes for the theophanic experience of encountering God in the face of Jesus Christ. He wants to establish a theological framework that can be invisible or transparent, allowing one to encounter God for oneself. It is the generative power of the originating, convicting experiences that brings life to the Christ. Thus, to be preoccupied with the noetic is pathological. Theology must stay close to the pneumatic, to the source experience, to the originating event.⁴²

Similarly, in his recent work on pneumatology, Gary Badcock draws upon the thought of the Irish theologian and Carmelite mystic, Noel Dermot O'Donoghue, for whose thought the idea of a "source experience" plays a central part. The "source experience" is mediated by the Holy Spirit, and without that experience as mediated by the Holy Spirit, "the whole theological enterprise," Badcock writes, "either hardens into intellectual or moral puritanism, or else tends too radically to humanism."⁴³

⁴⁰This is Voegelin's answer to the question, why philosophize? "To Recapture Reality!" Eric Voegelin, *Autobiographical Reflections*, Edited, with an Introduction by Ellis Sandoz (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), p. 93.

⁴¹Voegelin in Kirby and Thompson, p. 15.

⁴²Cf. a similar point made by Thomas F. Torrance, *God and Rationality* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971): "Theology must be reconstructed by keeping the concepts close to the objective source that gave rise to them.(p. 20)" For when "we detach concepts from their natural field of continuous interrelation in space-time and break them up into individual clear-cut ideas, we snap their line of intelligible connection with reality, for it is through that field at its basic points that they are correlated with reality. (p. 17)" In Loder's theology the source of theological consideration is not an idea, but the person Jesus Christ. Ideas become surrogates for the person-to-person encounter, thereby distorting the Christian life.

⁴³Gary D. Badcock, *Light of Truth & Fire of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, p. 4. "If theology ceases to be really related to God who is the source of life, in other words, then it is no longer *truly* theological (p. 4)." Cf. Noel Dermot O'Donoghue, "Vision and Systems," in *Heaven in Ordinarie* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979), p. 149, and his "Mystical

Which means as "long as there is any attachment to something other than the source," he writes, "then full attachment to the source is impossible, impossible by a kind of mathematical impossibility."⁴⁴ Which means, as Badcock shows, "it is the authenticity of the source, rather than external criteria, that lends authenticity and value to the source experience, and to the visionary-worlds of the mystical writers and poets that flow from it."⁴⁵ The external criteria, such as historical text, narratives, or interpretations of what took place in an experience as determined by historical-critical methods, reliance upon tradition cannot become substitutes for the real thing. And yet, this appears to be precisely what has transpired over the centuries of the Christian church.⁴⁶

Therefore, the way in which history is *constructed* and *used* might say more about the inner dynamics of the self than about some objective reality we might create and call "history."⁴⁷ As Loder has shown us, integral to being human is the drive toward greater meaning and intelligibility of reality. How the human mind organizes reality is contingent upon the encounter between the ego and one's

Imagination," in *Religious Imagination*, Edited by James P. Mackey (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986), pp. 186-205. "For the mystic as such the commitment is, first and last, finalised and energised by an experience of the source of all man's worlds and works, an experience of the source of man's being and of all goodness. All truth and beauty as well. It is from this experience that all mystical imagination flows." Cited in Badcock, p. 142.

⁴⁴O'Donoghue, "Mystical Imagination," cited in Badcock, p. 142. Attachment to something other than the source is an expression of two-dimensional existence. Attachment to the source and dwelling in the generative power of it is to exist four-dimensionally.

⁴⁵Badcock, p. 142.

⁴⁶Badcock goes on to suggest, with views that are parallel with my own and what Loder was trying to do for the discipline of theology in its service to the church: "It is to a theology geared to such experience, an experience that we might describe in biblical terms as what occurs when seeking becomes finding, that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit calls us. It may even be that an openness to such experience is the one thing that might sustain theology itself, while also preserving it from becoming a moral or intellectual straitjacket. At times, in short, theological formulation must be secondary to spiritual experience, the 'system' to the 'vision,' for it is only where the religious vision is kept alive that justice can be done to the object of the system itself, who is not *so much* the God of the philosophers as he is the living God of the human heart.(pp. 142-143)"

⁴⁷On the way ideas can be used to push away seeing reality refer to José Ortega Y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses* (New York: Norton, 1957), pp. 156-157. "Take stock of those around you and you will hear them talk in precise terms about themselves and their surroundings, which would seem to point to them having ideas on the matter. But start to analyze those ideas and you will find that they hardly reflect in any way the reality to which they appear to refer, and if you go deeper you will discover that there is not even an attempt to adjust the ideas to this reality. Quite the contrary: through these notions the individual is trying to cut off any personal vision of reality, of his own very life. For life is at the start a chaos in which one is lost. The individual suspects this, but he is frightened at finding himself face to face with this terrible reality, and tries to cover it over with a curtain of fantasy, where everything is clear. It does not worry him that his 'ideas' are not true, he uses them as trenches for the defense of his existence, as scarecrows to fright away reality."

environment. Standing between the ego and one's environment is the power of negation. Loder, therefore, cautions us to pay attention to the way in which all ideas *function* within the self and wider society and more importantly, to listen to what they tell us about the self.

III. The Grammar of Absence

If we accept Loder's multi-dimensional schema of the way reality is constituted in the human knower, then the view of reality from which we operate is contingent upon the degree to which the human spirit cooperates with the Holy Spirit in His intent to yield a knowledge of reality that is Christomorphically defined. But, as we have seen from Loder's work, reality cannot be constituted four-dimensionally by the ego without the work of the Spiritual Presence of Christ. The ego can neither face nor embrace the void at the heart of being without the power of God, which allows the ego to affirm life in the face of the void (absence, loneliness, meaninglessness, and death). Apart from the power of the Holy to establish this reality, the ego is left to construct a two-dimensional world that seeks to block out the void. "This is because," Loder submits, "the ego is constructed on the principle that absences, although a necessary part of existence, are to be denied and inflicted on the environment through objectification and control, but from the egoistic standpoint, if possible they are to be 'managed,' not embraced and suffered through."⁴⁸

In the realm of human experience, I would suggest that one of the obvious (although often overlooked) expressions of our struggle with the void can be seen in our preoccupation with history, specifically the way historical knowledge originates in the face of an existential crisis of being. Our drive to remember former times, to study the past, the emergence of historical consciousness and the *sensus historicus*, our desire to capture that which has been lost and in so doing becoming aware of our historicity and the limits of human experience within time-space are all expressions of *absence*. As Eberhard Jüngel (b.1932) illustrates, "Our historical knowledge covers only what remains. The past as a totality is always being lost . . ."⁴⁹ The purpose of writing an historical text, for example, is to make present that which once was. When one seeks to give voice to the past, when one seeks to articulate that which once was, one searches for a grammar, a vocabulary that can give voice to and articulate an experience of absence. As a result, the pursuit after the historical is one way humanity tries to come to terms with its mortality. The sense of loss is *expressed* through a text and what we find in most historical texts are, as Anthony Kemp has trenchantly and poignantly described in *The Estrangement of*

⁴⁸TTM2, p. 173.

⁴⁹Eberhard Jüngel, "The Effectiveness of Christ Withdrawn: On the process of historical understanding as an introduction to Christology," *Theological Essays*, trans. J. B. Webster (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), pp. 226-227:

the Past: A Study in the Origins of Modern Historical Consciousness, grammars of absence.⁵⁰ What drives the historian, Edith Wyschogrod submits, is an "eros for the dead." The "historian's responsibility is mandated by another who is absent, cannot speak for herself, one whose actual face the historian may never see, yet to whom 'giving countenance' becomes a task."⁵¹ Similarly, George Hegel (1770-1831) said the task of the historian is "to hold fast what is dead."⁵² The inner dynamics of the self, the deep structures of the psyche, subject to sin, brokenness and alienation, are written large upon the tableau of reality we often think of as history, which is in many ways reality as the totality of death.⁵³

This land of shadows is perhaps one of the most tangible reminders and demonstrations of the void at the heart of being. As a result, it also raises considerable theological questions as to whether "history" (as an expression of the void), understood in any form, has the power mediate the presence of Christ. A quick glance over the last two millennia of the church will demonstrate that this is precisely what we have done. Karl Barth once mourned that after Schleiermacher, the potentially great theological minds became historians, and instead of theologizing wrote histories of theology.⁵⁴ Christian historians and historical theologians have tried to give countenance to Jesus and thus establish a continuity him. Characterizing Schleiermacher's approach, Barth writes, "The primary thing that makes a Christian a Christian and establishes the church neither is nor has to be an original encounter of God with man but the mediacy of a supposedly Christian history, the continuum of the religious stimulation which runs through this history. . . ."⁵⁵ I would argue that the church has been guilty of this since the early centuries of the church. "Christian history" cannot serve for Loder as a substitute for the encounter required in

⁵⁰Anthony Kemp, *The Estrangement of the Past: A Study in the Origins of Modern Historical Consciousness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 3ff.

⁵¹Edith Wyschogrod, *An Ethics of Remembering: History, Heterology, and the Nameless Others* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. xii - xiii.

⁵²Cited Wyschogrod, p. ix. The distinguished historian, G. M. Trevelyan (1876-1928) referred to his work as entering "that land of mystery we call the past." "The dead were and are not. Their place knows them no more, and is ours today. Yet they were once as real as we, and we shall tomorrow be shadows like them." G. M. Trevelyan, *Clio: A Muse and Other Essays* (1913) cited in David Cannadine, *G. M. Trevelyan: A Life in History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993), p. 196.

⁵³Cf. Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), "At every point in history we find life. And it is of life and of every kind in the most varied relationships that history consists. History is simply life conceived of from the standpoint of mankind as a total coherence." From his *Fortsetzung*, cited in Theodore Plantinga, *Historical Understanding in the Thought of Wilhelm Dilthey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), p. 129.

⁵⁴Karl Barth, *Protestant Thought: From Rousseau to Ritschl* (Salem, NH: Ayer Company, 1971).

⁵⁵Karl Barth, *The Theology of Schleiermacher: Lectures at Göttingen, Winter Semester of 1923/24*. Edited by Dietrich Ritschl; Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Press, 1982), p. 31.

moments of conviction. Conviction is always an encounter with an *Other*, with a Thou, a presence in the now. To have reality mediated by any other means (such as "Christian history") is representative of a two-dimensional mode of being that is, in truth of fact, alienated from the presence of God. For Loder, it is the Holy Spirit - and only the Holy Spirit - who "gives countenance" to the glory of God in the *face* of Jesus Christ. Thus, Loder would lead us to conclude that to a considerable degree our views of history, apart from the mediating presence of the Holy Spirit, are mirror projections of the fallen self.

So that if we took Loder's work as an imaginative interpretative lens through which to apprehend the ego's historico-epistemological constructions of reality, I think we would discover that maladaptive patterns have been at work for centuries, patterns that have actually hindered faith and disfigured the face of Christ.

IV. The Search for the Face and the Power of Negation

The birth of the Christian era began with the source or primal experience of the early Christians in their face-to-face encounter with Jesus Christ. From the time of the ascension to the present, as the church waits for the *parousia*, one of the greatest challenges to the church in its articulation of the Christian life and its theological reflection is explaining how we continue to maintain a meaningful, life-giving connection with its source who is not historically absent and physically displaced. Loder suggests that the Christian experience involves a continuous desire and search after the Face - for the presence of God in Christ, a presence that fills the experience of absence which the ego cannot endure or embrace. But time is not static, we perceive movement - movement toward some unknown horizon away from the source. Yet the ability to reach our destination is somehow contingent upon our ability to relate to the source. This relationality of source to destination and destination to source can serve as a helpful image to get a handle on these maladaptive patterns at the heart of the early church experience coming to grips with its identity after the ascension of Jesus Christ. Issues relating to remembrance, the need to connect somehow with the Risen Christ, the increasing generational spans as the church moved further away from its generative experience, and the problems this created for the next seventeen hundred years might all be viewed within the framework of searching after the face of Christ. What the first disciples and early church experienced can also be understood as an originating, primal experience. But the question remains, how can there be continuity with Christ in the midst of so much that suggests historical discontinuity? For those who are untimely born, centuries after this source experience the question remains how we connect with it.

If we take Loder's study of the primal psychological experience of an infant and then apply it to the crisis brought on by the delay of the *parousia*, which is an experience of facelessness, then we are given, perhaps, a new framework to understand the early church's primal experience with Jesus and how the turn to history instead of bringing us closer to Christ has actually moved us farther away from him.

That primal, originating experience of life is the face-to-face encounter between an infant (approximately three months old) and his/her primary caretaker. As we saw in the last chapter, Loder believes everyone is searching for a recovery of the primal, originating experience of the face-to-face relationship between an infant and an other. "The self is looking for the *impact* of that experience in which *one is given a place in the cosmos, confirmed as a self, and addressed by the presence of a loving other*. To say this is 'nothing but' regressive wishing is purely reductive; rather, the prototypical impact is set by the first encounter. The longing is for a loving other to address the whole person (as before), including the differentiated ego with all its competencies, and to set that whole-differentiated person into the cosmos as self-affirmed and beloved."⁵⁶ This is the desire of the human spirit, but the story of the church is in many ways a frustration of this goal. Let us take a closer look at this process.

A. The Primal/ Source Experience

The Apostle Paul (d. 64/67) wrote to the church in Corinth, "Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power (1 Corinthians 15:20-24)." For Paul, the coming of the promised Messiah in the man, Jesus of Nazareth, announced the fulfillment of God's promises revealed through God's encounter with the people Israel. The triumph of God over the forces of sin and death through the resurrection of Jesus from the grave ushered in a new time in the history of the world. Paul believed in the reality of this new time, based not upon his reading of the scriptures or upon stories about what happen in Jesus' life, but because of the transforming encounter he experienced along the Damascus Road.⁵⁷ This Paul, who as Saul was popularly known as one bent on the abuse and murder of this disturbing Christian sect (Galatians 1:13; Acts 8:3; 9:21; 22:4) became a follower of Christ due to an individual encounter. When Paul refers to his encounter with Christ or the Spirit of Christ he is not relating to an idea *about* Christ, but engaging the presence of Christ, *person to person*, who acts relationally. The resurrection for Paul involved a radical perceptual transformation of the way he viewed himself, Judaism, even creation. This is because the experience itself was historical and ontological. That is, similar to all those prior to Paul who came to faith in Christ, Paul's experience was anchored firmly in the coordinates of space-time. This historical encounter took on ontological significance because it brought about a radical change in his being, the

⁵⁶TTM2, p. 166. Italics in the text.

⁵⁷Paul's account is recorded in Galatians 1:11-2:10. See also Acts 9:3-16 with some minor differences. "For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ. (Galatians 1:12)"

implications of which were played out in his life and ministry. This why for Paul "Resurrection is a historical-ontological category, manifesting in this world the dawning of the new age of transformation."⁵⁸

The resurrection brings with it new insights as it opens up and reveals new avenues into the knowledge and work of God in creation. As a result, the resurrection is viewed by Paul as an apocalyptic event.⁵⁹ Apocalyptic thinking revolved around three basic ideas of historical dualism, universal cosmic expectation, and the imminent end of the world. An event will take place to produce a radical discontinuity between the present age and the age to come. It would be a time of immense struggle, but in the end results in the culmination of God's reign over creation. What is more, this event would occur soon - very soon. Beker makes the point that these were not preoccupations of speculative and abstract thinkers. Instead, "apocalyptic is born out of a deep existential concern and is in many respects a theology of martyrdom. The apocalypticist has a profound awareness of a distinction between what is and what should be, and of the tragic tension between faithfulness to the Torah and its apparent futility."⁶⁰ Resurrection signals the beginning of the new realm to come, the final justice and triumph of God, because "the resurrection of Christ announces the imminent dawn of the general resurrection to come."⁶¹

Therefore, one of the major insights Paul received from the resurrection of Christ, viewed apocalyptically, is that the world as he knew it, indeed, all of history, was coming to an end. Paul's "passionate temper and lifestyle are not the result of personal idiosyncrasy, but are the part of his awareness that he is the man of the hour whose mission takes place in the last hours of world history. He knows himself to be the eschatological apostle who spans the times between the resurrection of Christ and the final resurrection of the dead."⁶² Throughout his correspondence, Paul talks about the revelation of God's final glory, although he appears to be ambiguous about the order of events, and what exactly will transpire.⁶³ The glory of God will be revealed and enter the fallen world, bringing about the

⁵⁸J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), p. 153.

⁵⁹Beker, pp. 135, 143-144. Beker has clearly identified that Paul was apocalyptic in his Pharisaic career, and this apocalyptic perspective was heightened after his Damascus Road experience, in fact, for Paul the resurrection of Christ can only be viewed within such a framework

⁶⁰Beker, p. 136.

⁶¹Beker, p. 153.

⁶²Beker, pp. 144-145. "The major apocalyptic forces are, for [Paul], those ontological powers that determine the human situation within the context of God's created order and comprise the 'field' of death, sin, the law, and the flesh. Paul does not oppose 'this age' to 'the coming age.' (p. 145)"

⁶³"The catchword *glory* is used wherever the final state of affairs is set apart from the present and whenever a final amalgamation of the earthly and heavenly spheres is prophesied." Klaus Koch, *The*

redemption of all that has decayed (Romans 8:19-23). Significantly, this glory "will not annihilate the world," Beker suggests, "but only break off its present structure of death, because it aims to transform the cosmos rather than to confirm its ontological nothingness."⁶⁴ "The resurrection of Christ marks the beginning of the process of transformation," Beker observes, "and its historical reality is therefore crucial to Paul because it marks the appearance of the end in history and not simply the end of history. It is not the intrapsychic event; rather, it appeals to the Christian's solidarity with the stuff of creation that God has destined for 'resurrection' glory."⁶⁵ The victory of God over evil, decay and death, will take place in the parousia of Christ in history, then the kingdom of God will be fully realized (1 Corinthians 15:24).

We see that history viewed as a dynamic *field* of activity that was open to the future, with events constituted, as it were, by the tension or conflict between the initial resurrection of Christ and his promised return at the culmination of the age, which will be at any moment.⁶⁶ Paul's ministry and his writings, (composed between A.D. 50-56) are situated within this tension. Yet, Paul is very vague as to whether this new creation will include a redeemed historical reality or not, for to be apocalyptic is not necessarily to be anti-history. The glorious liberty of the children of God (Romans 8:21) is lived out, not after the destruction of the world, but within the cosmos redeemed by the same God who created, upholds and remains faithful to it. Nevertheless, the parousia, Paul believed, will bring about the end of the world as he knew it, so that the world can be redeemed and restored to what it was intended to be, a world beyond his ability to conceive or imagine (1 Corinthians 2:9).

But how long does one have to wait? Living within this tension could not be maintained forever without seriously undermining the meaning of Christ's resurrection, without it becoming an empty promise. The delay of the parousia caused considerable problems for the early church. The historical field constituted by the tension between the particular resurrection and the general, universal one, began to collapse, and the conceptions of the way time was perceived started to change. We can identify two strategies. We turn to Beker for yet another helpful summary. One way involved a conflation of the points, a spiritualization. Colossians, Ephesians, John are representative of this approach. The second is the diffusion of the tension, which allowed the postponement of the apocalyptic promise indefinitely. This tendency can be found in 2 Peter, 2 Thessalonians, and, most-importantly for our study, in Luke-

Rediscovery of the Apocalyptic: A Polemical Work on a Neglected Area of Biblical Studies and Its Damaging Effects on Theology and Philosophy. Studies in Biblical Theology, 2/22. (London: SCM Press, 1972), pp. 28-32.

⁶⁴Beker, p. 149.

⁶⁵Beker, p. 149.

⁶⁶"The resurrection heightened rather than relaxed the longing for the Parousia." Beker, p. 152. Cf.. 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 & Philippians 3:20-21.

Acts.⁶⁷

B. *The Delay of the Parousia and the Appeal to History*

When the gospel writers of the New Testament composed their accounts of Jesus' life, they did so not as historians, but as *theologians*. Their intent was not to write history, as we have come to understand history as offering a chronological or an objective account of what really happened, but to reflect theologically upon what occurred in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Their goal was to give an account, a narrative grounded in theological reflection and imagination. They are all different in focus and intent. But the *genre* was certainly unparalleled, formed to meet the needs of the First Century congregations.⁶⁸

As theological texts, and not necessarily historical ones, they were written with certain basic assumptions. For our purposes here, we must note that the gospels were not written to confirm historical facts.⁶⁹ Instead, the facticity of the claims was important only to the degree that they provided the basis for what was really important, namely, the message of the Gospel, and the one who proclaimed this message - Jesus, the Christ. First century Christians were not trapped in a positivistic obsession with "just the facts," as twentieth century historians have tended to be; as if "just the facts" could exhaust and reveal what is true or real, and therefore historical, and if historical, then true or real. To take our contemporary presuppositions concerning facts and history and apply them to the gospel is actually abusive to the texts, forcing them to do something they were never intended to do.⁷⁰ The first Christians came to place their faith in Jesus Christ, not through a reliance upon the story, but through an encounter

⁶⁷Beker, p. 160.

⁶⁸See Luke T. Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), pp. 35-39. See also Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), pp. 10-13.

⁶⁹In Matthew 2:23, we find this verse, "And [Jesus] went and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, 'he shall be called a Nazarene.'" However, biblical scholars are at odds to find this prophecy anywhere in the Old Testament. In *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), literary critic Robert Alter claims that biblical writers were fully aware that they were not scripting first person accounts, and intentionally employed the "playfulness and skill of a modern storyteller. Not only did they interpret historical events, argues Alter; they sometimes *created* events out of their own literary imaginations." Quoted in Nancy J. Duff, *Humanization and the Politics of God: The Koinonia Ethics of Paul Lehmann* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), p. 89.

⁷⁰This was the major mistake of historical criticism, treating the gospels as source material for the historian and for the theologian writing as a historian. A reliance upon the critical-historical method paved the way for Rudolf Bultmann's (1884-1976) "demythologization" of the New Testament. See Alister E. McGrath, *The Making of Modern German Christology, 1750-1990* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), pp.154-162.

with the Risen Christ that was either physical or spiritual in nature. The truth claims of the gospels were not the result of conclusions deductively drawn through the analysis of the facts. The gospel writers came to their conclusions about Jesus Christ because of their encounters with him, which constituted a new view of reality, and when appropriated through faith and made concrete through the power of the Holy Spirit, led to confession, discipleship, yielding a completely new understanding and experience of reality never previously experienced.

It is somewhat ironic, given the historical character of the divine revelation in the New Testament (as well as the Old Testament) in that it took place in space-time and given the power of this revelation to redefine the way reality is perceived (even the way we date years from that defining moment), that the word "history" is conspicuously absent in the texts. An examination of the etymology of the word "history" and its use in the New Testament is important to note. "History" originated with the Greeks for whom it was closely tied to philosophy and poetry. It derives from *eidenai*, meaning "to know (thought having seen)," and is related to the philosophic term *eidos* meaning, "idea." The early form of the word generally meant "witnessing," "knowing," or "enquiring."⁷¹ Ricouer notes that the noun form of *historeo*, "*historia* is precisely the 'availability' and 'submission to the unexpected,' that 'openness to others' whereby bad subjectivity is overcome."⁷²

These Greek notions of "history," certainly influenced the writers of the New Testament. Kittel makes the point that Paul was not "indifferent to the actual history of Jesus. He used to display Jesus before the eyes of the communities as crucified among them (Galatians 1:1). But he had nothing in common with Greek historical writing, though he does use [*historeo*] at Gal. 1:18 - the only occurrence in the NT - in the common Hellenistic sense of 'visit in order to get to know.'"⁷³ Paul relays that "after three days [he] went up to Jerusalem to visit Peter, and remained with him fifteen days." *Historeo* is translated "to visit" in the New Revised Standard Version. In his commentary on this pericope, Eugene H. Peterson detects a "colloquial tone to it," meaning "to sit down and swap stories. Paul did not go to lecture to him or to report to him or to propagandize him, he only went to visit. The two men put their feet up in front of a few coals of fire and traded stories. . . ."⁷⁴ What is important to stress here is that the only time when this word is used in the New Testament it is understood as an interpersonal

⁷¹Gillespie, p. 2.

⁷²The origins of historiography can be established around the fifth century, B. C., generally associated with the writings of Herodotus (c.484-c.425), considered the "father of history," for whom history was an enquiry not of ideas but of human affairs. Here the distinctively personal element of historical knowledge can be seen. Ricouer, *History and Truth*, p. 31.

⁷³Kittel, p. 396.

⁷⁴Eugene H. Peterson, *Traveling Light: Modern Meditations of St. Paul's Letter of Freedom* (Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers & Howard, 1988), p. 53.

interaction, a *personal* encounter, whereby indwelling the presence of the other yields a certain kind of personal knowledge. The use of *historeo* implies not so much an objective, analytic, matter-of-fact quality often identified with this word. Instead, biblically speaking its use speaks of encounter, an engagement or conversation between two people. There is the additional sense that this exchange is almost an unconscious, natural occurrence. The deeply personal element cannot be denied. Gerhard Kittel (1888-1948) notes that "The man who knows puts his knowledge into effect *vis-à-vis* the ignorant by telling what he knows." So that the end or purpose of history in this context can be understood as a personal, subjective engagement.⁷⁵ However, the interpersonal, subjective, future oriented dynamic field would soon come to an end.

Luke-Acts marks a significant shift in the way the early church starts to think of itself as a historical entity and reevaluates the importance of history as a way of preserving the tradition.⁷⁶ What is missing is the personal dimension found in Paul's use of the word. The reason for this shift is what interests us here. The literary genre of Luke-Acts has interesting parallels with various forms of Greek historical writing.⁷⁷ As stated above, this is because of the delay of the parousia caused a major crisis within the early church, precipitating a move away from apocalyptic thinking.⁷⁸ But Luke is not interested in writing to this crisis and instead comes up with a completely different schema. Luke restructures the whole understanding of his present time by introducing a new idea. Beker has made a significant observation in seeing that Luke substitutes apocalyptic presumptions with historical assumptions, influenced by Hellenistic historiography. Luke's "salvation-historical sketch turns

⁷⁵Gerhard Kittel, editor, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Translator and Editor (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965), pp. 391-396.

⁷⁶The inception and development of a distinctively Greek use of history in the Christian experience can be identified quite clearly in Luke and Acts. "The early Christian tradition first comes into contact with Greek historical writing in Luke," suggests Kittel, p. 396.

⁷⁷G. W. Trompf, *The Idea of Historical Recurrence in Western Thought: From Antiquity to the Reformation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979). Luke is an Hellenistic historian who forms a narrative (*diēgēsis*) from material handed down by eyewitnesses (p. 321). Trompf notes that "much has been done on Greco-Roman influence on Christianity, little on the merging of historiographical perceptions, models and methods in the patristic and later periods. (p. 179)"

⁷⁸Beker attributes a shifting philosophical and cultural climate, as well as, the apologetic missionary objectives of the first Christians, p. 160. The strain in apocalyptic thinking can be seen in Paul's response to those questioning the return of Christ, in 2 Thessalonians. Rudolf Bultmann writes, "The problem of Eschatology [synonymous with apocalyptic in Bultmann's Gifford Lectures of 1955] grew out of the fact that the expected end of the world failed to arrive, that the 'Son of Man' did not appear in the clouds of heaven, that history went on, and that the eschatological community could not fail to recognise that it had become a historical phenomenon and that the Christian faith had taken on the shape of a new religion. This is made clear by two facts: (a) the historiography of the author of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles (b) the importance which tradition gained in the Christian community." *The Presence of Eternity: History and Eschatology* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1957), p. 38.

attention away from the problem of the delay of the parousia. What occupies him is the present time as a time of missions."⁷⁹ He has no interest in writing about the "last days," he is writing to equip the church to live indefinitely in the new age of the Holy Spirit inaugurated in Jerusalem at Pentecost (Acts 2). With Luke, we have the church as historical, temporal entity, and the beginning of theological reflection informed by historical constructs. The church starts to think historically, and the narrative account of what transpired serves pedagogical and apologetic purposes. Let us take a brief look at the introductory words of the gospel.

Luke writes to his friend, Theophilus, the general reader, as honored, "the beloved of God": Inasmuch as many have already undertaken to compile a narrative of events which have been accomplished among us - just as those who from the beginning had been eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered to us - it seemed good to me also, having followed all things carefully from the beginning, to write a sequential account for you, dear Theophilus, that you may know the truth of the words in which you have been instructed. (Luke 1:1-14, translated by Eduard Schweizer)

Several important observations can be made concerning this text. The phrases "narrative of events," and "sequential account," based on "eyewitnesses and ministers of the word," indicate Luke's intent to make a connection between what transpired in Christ and what that experience has to do with his present situation in the church. The ordering of time, arranging sequence, and then providing an interpretative framework all point to methods of Greek historiography.⁸⁰ It is a movement from the past to their present, telling of an event that although in the past continues to live on in the present. The person recounting this is Luke, the historian. The past is not a completed past, but lives on through the present into an open future. The past is not completed or closed off. The promise of the gospel is forward looking because what transpired in the past continues effectually to shape all of time. Luke "stands between the past (the completed study on which his writing is based [perfect tense]) and the goal of his writing, which lies in the future: that Theophilus will be assured of what he has heard [aorist]. The line from the past through the present to the future is artfully presented: the saving event, institution of witnesses, their tradition, previous attempts, Luke's Gospel, the assurance of faith."⁸¹

⁷⁹Beker, p. 162. "Although he does not deny the Parousia and its expectation (Acts 1:11;3:20-21), he allows it to fade away to the periphery. . . . Luke aptly uses the solution of apocalyptic postponement to concentrate on the missionary demands of the church. The temporal end of time is diffused for the sake of the mission of the church."

⁸⁰Eduard Schweizer has shown that the first sentence alone resembles similar prefaces in contemporary historical works. Schweizer's study of the Greek verbs in this pericope reveals a contrastive movement from Greek aorist and Greek perfect, with a dative reference to himself. Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Luke*, Translated by David E. Green (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1984), pp. 10-11.

⁸¹"That the object, the events to be comprehended in words, is mentioned before the evangelist is no accident. Only the saving act itself and Luke's thorough study of it appear in the perfect tense, as elements of the past that continue to live in the present." Schweizer, pp. 10-11.

The need to write a new account of what transpired, with a specific hermeneutical perspective suggests, however, that the content and meaning of the tradition was open to debate.⁸² The objective to narrate the events of Jesus' life and ministry reflects the need to clarify what actually occurred, to say what essentially took place through Christ. There is no need to write down what happened unless there is some doubt over what exactly took place. There is no need to write it down, to make it into a concrete text, unless there is some fear it will be forgotten and hence misunderstood.⁸³ Already, it seems that as the church finds itself moving further and further away from the originating event it becomes increasingly difficult to know how to relate back to that event. Gaps begin to emerge, both temporal and psychological, that slowly produced anxiety within the early church.

The perceived absence of Christ and the delay of the parousia required a theological response. Luke's answer, suggestive of the Sicilian historian Diodorus Siculus (d. after 21 B. C.), is to say that through these events something happened, and that its effects are still being felt throughout their time.⁸⁴ Luke applies a distinctively Greek way to order and connect with these events, by using primary sources and seeking a narrative.⁸⁵ For that is what historians primarily do, they create narratives. The "historical narrative transforms *chronos* into history *sensu strictissimo*, it appears that 'where there is no narrative, there is no history.'" This is because "narrativization ties together the separate threads of chronicle by forming a centered structure with a definite beginning, middle, and end. This reading of narrative helps to explain the structure of history *as a whole*."⁸⁶ This is the point that Ricouer has made. "History begins and ends with the reciting of a tale (*recit*); and its intelligibility and coherence rest upon its

⁸²Schweizer, p. 11.

⁸³"History is only a catalogue of the forgotten." Henry Adams, *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*, in *Henry Adams: Novels, Mont Saint Michel, The Education*, Edited by Ernest Samuels and Jane N. Samuels (New York: Library of America, 1983), p. 343.

⁸⁴Schweizer, p. 11. "Accomplished" in Luke 1:1 can "mean the end of a certain period of time (as in Acts 14:26; 19:21; 24:24,27), but it usually refers to the will of God (Luke 8:31; 21:24; 22:16; Acts 7:23; 9:23) already announced in the Old Testament (Luke 4:21; 24:44; Acts 1:16; 3:18; 13:27). The latter is probably the meaning here. (p. 11)"

⁸⁵"... Luke gives speeches of Peter and Paul at important points in the story after the pattern of ancient historians." Hans Conzelmann, *Die Mitte der Zeit. Studien zur Theologie des Lukas* (1954) quoted in Bultmann, p.39.

⁸⁶Mark C. Taylor, *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 63, 64. Paul Ricouer makes the same point in *Time and Narrative*, Volume 1, Translated by Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pelauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), where he sees his goal is to discover "how the act of *raconteur*, of telling a story, can transmute *natural* time into a specifically *human* time, irreducible to mathematical, chronological 'clock time' (p. 3)" As to whether or not Luke was a good historian or not, see Luke T. Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), pp. 200- 204.

recital.”⁸⁷ The identification of the narrative structure of a story, and in particular, history, are creative acts whereby a self comes to obtain “new forms of human time.”⁸⁸ The way Luke seeks to connect with the past is by appealing to history, the story or narration of the event.

With the writing of *The Gospel According to Luke* and the *Acts of the Apostles*, one can discern a significant shift in the way the church begins to reflect upon its existence. It could be argued that Luke is probably the first Christian writer to make an appeal to history, to use it as a theological tool to retain continuity, a way to bridge the gap caused by the delay of the parousia.⁸⁹ With the continuing delay of the parousia, the early church was forced to wrestle with its relationship to the past. With the advent of new generations of Christians, living farther away in time from Jesus’ death and resurrection, and the collapse of an apocalyptic outlook, the church had to provide a way, a model of how one can be a contemporary of Christ in terms of a faith experience, while at the same time, being a historical entity moving farther away from the original event.⁹⁰ How does one ensure the vitality of the faith against the vicissitudes of time moving one away from the revelational constitution of reality in Christ? How does one traverse this temporal distance?

Certainly, the widespread reference to the Holy Spirit throughout Acts is one way of coming to terms with this loss. The Holy Spirit has an active *historical* role, encountering disciples, directing missionary journeys, evangelical meetings, forming the church, pointing the way to Christ, making that connection. Even so, it is what the Holy Spirit had done in the past, not a report of what was happening in the immediate present. The Holy Spirit becomes limited to the words of the story. This is because

⁸⁷In an interview with Richard Kearney, *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1984), p. 16.

⁸⁸Ricoeur, quoted in Kearney, p. 20. Drawing upon Hannah Arendt, Ricoeur affirms, “the meaning of existence is not just the power to change or master the world, but also the ability to be remembered and recollected in narrative discourse, to be *memorable*. There existential and historical implications of narratives are very far-reaching, for they determine what is to be preserved and rendered ‘permanent’ in a culture’s sense of its own past, of its own ‘identity’.(p. 18)”

⁸⁹“Luke’s view of history also determines his conception of Scripture, as is evident from his use of Scripture proof.” Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, Translated by James Limburg, A. Thomas Kraabel, and Donald H. Juel, Edited by Eldon Jay Epp with Christopher R. Matthews (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), p. xlvii.

⁹⁰See J. Louis Martyn’s discussion of the way the gospel writers sought to preserve the tradition of the church and at the same time speak to their contemporary situation. “The early church shared with many groups of its time a concern for tradition which exceeds by far that known to us. The past - specific events and teachings of the past - lived on with power and somehow mingled with events of the present. To the ancients it was far more obvious than it is to us that one’s response to contemporary issues involves careful consideration of the traditions inherited from one’s forbears. Indeed it was responsible contemporary involvement which most often sharpened the sense of need for tradition and which is therefore mainly to be thanked for preserving the voice of the past.” *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1979), pp. 18-19.

the primary way of providing a solution is by making an appeal to history. For Luke, Hans Conzelmann writes, "The presupposition is that the church is a historical entity which has its own particular time; in other words, that the imminent end of history has been transformed into a portrait of history."⁹¹

It is no mistake, then, that Acts is considered the first recorded history of the church and the only document in the New Testament that could be categorized as history, but with a strong theological flavour. Perhaps. The emergence of such a unique document, I would suggest, says more about what the community *lacked* than about what it "possessed," namely a connection with the Risen Christ. As historical text, it serves as a literary expression of the particularly Christian dilemma of a community coming to terms with historical reality, brought on by the delay of the parousia. That historical reality is the awareness of temporal distance, is *experienced* as a form of despair over the church's inability to retain a sense of contemporaneity with the Risen Christ. The place where we can see this struggle to connect with the Risen Christ is through the writings of the early church, specifically in Luke-Acts. The sense of loss is *expressed* through a text and what we find in most historical texts is what Anthony Kemp has trenchantly described as grammars of absence.⁹²

Looking at Luke's unique methodology in writing his *Gospel* and *Acts* we can identify a subtle, yet critical shift in the way the early church began to look theologically at historical reality. What we have in Luke is a vision that is, in the end, certainly theologically informed, but before we arrive there it is first filtered through a particular view of history. There is a considerable appeal to Hellenist historiographical methods, and a recasting of historical phenomena in such a way that tries to "make sense" of the parousia's delay, as it equips the church for this world-historical missionary and apologetic experience. It is as if Luke is saying to the church, "We could be here for a while. We might as well settle in and get used to it." It seems to me that the apocalyptic expectations become historicized in ways that are theologically inadequate because they yield an understanding of reality that is not thoroughly grounded in an understanding of the incarnation-resurrection and are not personal and relational.⁹³

⁹¹Conzelmann, p. xlv. "Continuity is also established by the Spirit as the abiding possession of the church. It is striking that continuity in the history of the church is not located in institutions.(p. xlv)"

Bultmann notes that tradition took on greater significance during this time, as well. The Pastoral Epistles, for example, "are especially interested in the trustworthiness of the leaders of the community, whose duty it is to uphold the tradition. Indeed, the growth and development of the ecclesiastical office has its ground especially in the need to guarantee the safety of the tradition. The most important part of that tradition is the *doctrine*, because the community is not constituted on a national or social basis but by the word which calls the individuals into the community. (p. 39)"

⁹²The central argument in Anthony Kemp, *The Estrangement of the Past: A Study in the Origins of Modern Historical Consciousness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 3ff.

⁹³Cf. Maurice Merleau-Ponty's comment that the early church did not live out the "Incarnation. . . in all its consequences. The first Christians felt abandoned after the death of Christ and looked everywhere for a trace of him. Centuries later the Crusaders plunged into the search for an empty tomb. And this was because they had worshiped the Son in the spirit of the religion of the Father. They had not

C. *Disorientation and the Restriction of Time*

To "be here," to have duration, is one way of saying that the church came to see itself as an historical entity. This realization posed considerable difficulties for the church. First, there was the problem of how to take the power of the originating, primal, transforming experiences with Jesus Christ that eventually formed the church and convey it to succeeding generations in such a way that was equally primal and transforming.⁹⁴ Ernst Breisach has demonstrated that after the year 500 the church had to wrestle with the "problem of continuity in an age of upheaval."⁹⁵ But the problem emerges even earlier. The question posed to them was, "How can we preserve what transpired in our lives and impart it to those others, like Paul, who are 'untimely born,' who come after the first generation church?" First-hand knowledge is always more persuasive, and has within it a greater potential for change and transformation. By first-hand, I mean something that one personally experiences for oneself, it is not mediated through another source. To hear someone else give an account of their significant, meaningful event, and not experience it for oneself, as witness, first-hand, is never as powerful. Because this is often the case the primal experience is codified, fixed within the oral tradition of a culture, or written down as text and formed into a canon.⁹⁶ A tradition then develops around that event preserved by an institution that looks to the tradition to communicate the intensity and significance of the originating event. It is questionable, however, whether later generations are ever able to know what it was like for the first generation of Christians. This is an issue that Loder's pneumatology addresses directly and offers a correction. It is this prevailing, non-pneumatologically oriented approach throughout the history of the church that devitalizes the Christian life.

The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ takes place in a certain point of time, bringing about revolutionary changes in the way God, reality, humanity, and the world are all conceived. As the church, discovering and coming to grips with its historical identity, moved farther and farther away from the originating event it struggled to maintain a connection with its valuable past. This slow drift away

yet understood that God was with them now and forever." "Faith and Good Faith," in *Sense and Nonsense*, Translated by Hubert L. & Patricia Allen Dreyfuss (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 172.

⁹⁴This is often the case for religious and social reforms groups trying to pass on their beliefs to the next generation that finds itself removed from the originating circumstance. See the insightful essay by anthropologist Anthony F. C. Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," *American Anthropology*, 58 (1956): 264-81.

⁹⁵Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 88.

⁹⁶On the way a text and further commentary on and criticism of a text creates a sense of "false immediacy," see George Steiner, *Real Presences* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989), pp. 4-50.

in time, yields *over* time, a perception of time as a mighty, swift current separating early Christians from their Savior. There was an increasing awareness of the emergence of gaps, as it were, temporal, psychological, and spiritual in nature.⁹⁷ The movement through time and identification of these gaps created a sense of loss and alienation, abandonment, and absence for early Christians, feelings that continue to affect the church today.

Since Jesus' ascension and the birth of the church, the development of narratives, frameworks of coherence, philosophies of history, and theological conceptualizations of history can all be viewed as having their root in this Promethean-like desire to pull together disparate moments in time, to preserve them as a unity, as a whole. One way of looking at this drive toward narrative and coherence is the need to maintain the primary relationship with the Risen Christ. They are attempts to explain what happened at that point in time as having a relationship with what transpires in every subsequent moment in time. The writings from the first few centuries of the church reveal an obsession with continuity, a fear of heresy, of anything that could make them feel even further away from Christ, but they must not be taken at face value. All of this reveals something else. "The formulation of a verbal consciousness implies the subverbal experience of its opposite; the rhetoric of unity and coherence is necessitated by the great and probable fear of infinite incoherence. . . ."⁹⁸ The drive for coherence and connection is a symptom of a deeper problem, namely the fear of temporal and spiritual absence. The church's relationship *with* and to what extent it is dependent *upon* its past ultimately deals with this question of coherence. For unless this relationship *across* time and *in* time can be maintained, then the effectiveness of the gospel and its claims to universal truth are seriously compromised, and the authority of the church itself undermined. In some ways, an argument can be made that the task of theology, especially over the last two hundred years in defense against the attacks of the Enlightenment, can be characterized as the need to respond in apologetic fashion to these *perceived* gaps - temporal, psychological, spiritual - that begin to emerge early in the history of the church.⁹⁹ Throughout the last two millennia, the church has looked

⁹⁷This is not unlike what Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781) referred to in his essay "On the Proof of the Spirit and of Power (*Ueber den Beweis des Geistes und der Kraft*).⁹⁷ Henry Chadwick *Lessing's Theological Writings: Selections in Translation with an Introductory Essay* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1956).

⁹⁸Kemp, p. 44.

⁹⁹That theology must not be reactionary to such secular threats, that it cannot be apologetic, has been advanced quite powerfully in the theology of Karl Barth in this century. ". . . good theologians do not serve themselves but God, since they do not proclaim themselves but God, their questions and doubts must have no final power over them. Nor must they try to support their heavenly Father with any well-meaning apologetics, but with confidence and gladness they must believe that God is not really dead and will thus himself see to the acknowledgment of his name, his will, and his kingdom." *Offene Briefe* 1945-68 (Zurich, 1984), pp. 553f. I use the word "perceived," intentionally. That these gaps were perceived does not necessarily mean they are real. They were perceived. Then as now, no doubt, perception is reality.

to conceptions of history, either as text or idea, as one possible way of dealing with these issues that developed as a result of the church becoming increasingly aware its historicity, seeing itself as an historical entity persisting through time. In this shift the seeds are planted for the *depersonalization* of the Christian experience.

As a result, various strategies developed to deal with these gaps, which I would argue are two-dimensional defense mechanisms that deny the gaps. Simply put, throughout the history of theology, once these gaps were identified, at least two strategies of response can be recognized: Avoidance and accommodation. Avoidance basically involved acting as if the gaps did not exist with outright denial. The other involved developing ways of negotiation through the gap or around it. Strategies of avoidance materialized in the first centuries of the Christian Era and lasted through the Reformation in the sixteenth century. The Renaissance-Reformation marks a major shift in the way the church thought about history. As Martin Luther was rediscovering the gospel, his contemporaries were also rediscovering the temporal gap that was denied by the early and medieval church. After the Reformation, these gaps could no longer be denied. But this does not mean they were accepted either, because the fundamental problem of how one relates to primal, originating experience was not solved. The fundamental problem posed by their conceptions of history could not deal with the temporal/historical/spiritual gap which was even more apparent to them, living fifteen hundreds years later. It is after this period that we start hearing about the "problem of history," specifically the problems history poses for faith. Although history posed a problem all along, one that theology had never really come to terms with. By the end of the nineteenth century theologians began to wrestle with what had become known as the faith *and* history question, a question that has cast a terrible shadow over much of twentieth century theology, as well. Every noteworthy theologian of the last two centuries has contributed to finding a solution to this thorny problem confronting theology and the church.

D. *The Loss of the Face and Two-Dimensionality*

One of the most engaging and adept studies on the origins of historical thinking in the West is Anthony Kemp's *The Estrangement of the Past: A Study in the Origins of Modern Historical Consciousness*. He writes not as a theologian or church historian, but as literary analyst with theological skill and, as a result, comes at the historical material with refreshing insights that have a profound effect upon the way we have come to think about history. He does a remarkable job of getting behind the texts to identify deeper patterns at work in the way the church has approached historical knowledge. Historical frameworks and texts were used by the early church to make up for the lost face of Christ. This work is particularly insightful and will be discussed at length because Kemp substantiates Loder's depiction of world views that are constituted two-dimensionally, established primarily as maladaptive responses of the ego to experiences of absence and loss. Let us see how this was done in the early

centuries of the church.

It is in the Eusebius of Caesarea's (c.260-c.340) *Historia ecclesiastica* in 324 that Kemp identifies the appearance of a new literary genre that serves a particular purpose, very similar to the intentions of the gospel writer, Luke.¹⁰⁰ Eusebius "attempts a comprehensive telling of the history of the Church, from Christ's Advent to Eusebius's present, and as such it must contain, at least implicitly, an interpretation of the *structure* of time." Eusebius' creative efforts to write a comprehensive, coherent narrative established a pattern for later attempts to write history. It is interesting to observe that the reason an official interpretation is required is due to the growing number of sources open to the chronicler or historian. The events cannot only be listed, they need to be ordered, arranged in order, to handle, grasp them. All efforts to formulate philosophies of history, both religious and secular, also find their origins here. All attempts at metaphysical frameworks for history, the need to "make sense," with grand overarching schemes of universal history, granting order to the chaos of time, the knitting together of fragments of history into a unified whole, can all find their inception here.

Kemp is most helpful in his examination of the motivations behind this drive for comprehensiveness. Echoing some of the themes raised earlier, Kemp explains a possible reason. "All religions posit some kind of separation between the believer and God; indeed, religions and myths are grammars of absence; they are complex verbal formulas that bring into consciousness that which is beyond the limits of phenomenal perception: the origins and *telos* of the universe, survival beyond death, the transcendent. In most religions this separation is phenomenal or perceptual; in Christianity, it is also temporal."¹⁰¹ The phenomenal or perceptual separation in Christianity is caused by the absence of Christ after the ascension. The apostolic witness testifies to this. "The object of faith, then, cannot be Christ himself, but the memory of Christ preserved by these witnesses; but the witnesses, although delivered from death in a spiritual or metahistorical sense, all died within history. The result was the inevitable reification of the living person of Christ into a text (actually a whole series of uncertain and competing texts, some outright forgeries), which became the object of faith when no living witnesses remained."¹⁰² There was some appeal to the Holy Spirit to make a connection with Christ. Nevertheless, a fixed,

¹⁰⁰After Luke-Acts, the application of historiography as a tool for the advancement of the gospel started by the early third century. The *Chronographia*, written between 212 and 221, by Sextus Julius Africanus (c.160-c.240) was probably the first attempt at an exhaustive account of the life of Christ and the church. But it is not a history as we would define it today. It was chronology, a listing of events without an overarching narrative structure. The text was revised by Eusebius and published as the *Chronicum libri duo*. Later revised by Jerome (348-420) and others, the *Chronicum* became the model for medieval chronology. Indrikis Sterns, *The Greater Medieval Historians: An Interpretation and Bibliography* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1980), pp. 6-8, 24, 87.

¹⁰¹Kemp, p. 5.

¹⁰²Kemp, p. 5.

orthodox, written creed was needed. The more the Spirit was invoked, however, the more the Church turned back to a written text. What takes place during this time is an emphasis on the power and authority of the organized Church (especially during the weakening and after the collapse of the Roman Empire), and the development of new temporal configurations. "This time of no revelation, of God's silence, of the long waiting, of the last hour that stretches into infinity - this was the history that Eusebius had to invent a shape for."¹⁰³ Eusebius' need to mold, configure, invent a shape for this past serves as the subtext of his endeavor, wrestling with an awareness that has haunted the last two thousand years of Western thought. In Christian consciousness - and the consciousness of the West cannot be separated from a specifically Christian consciousness - history is perceived as the absence of God.¹⁰⁴

For Eusebius, history becomes the language of absence that tries to re-present the past. His "formulation of history is such a complex interplay of absence and presence. The rhetoric is all of presence, of a unity with the past and with Christ; beneath can be discerned the terrible fear of discontinuity, the void his words must fill."¹⁰⁵ Language, story, narrative, verbal theology fill the gaps - an "experiential void" - created by the absence of Christ.

What haunted Eusebius and motivated his writing was the need to maintain a "sameness," with the past, to deny mutability of truth and time.¹⁰⁶ "I have purposed to record in writing the successions of the sacred apostles, covering the period stretching from our Saviour to ourselves; the number and character of the transactions recorded in the history of the church. . . ."¹⁰⁷ The use of the word "successions," Kemp notes, does not refer to the "passing of the mantle from one generation to the next," it does not refer to permutation or development, "but rather sameness."¹⁰⁸ Eusebius' time was the same

¹⁰³Kemp, p. 6.

¹⁰⁴There is a need to connect with that one far-off divine event. R. L. P. Milburn, *Early Christian Interpretations of History* (London: Adams and Charles Black, 1954).

¹⁰⁵Kemp, p. 10.

¹⁰⁶Cf. Paul Ricoeur's phenomenology exploring the challenges of narrating time, see Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Volume 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 41, 83-87.

¹⁰⁷Eusebius of Caesarea, *Eusebius: The Ecclesiastical History*, Translated by Kirsop Lake, 2 Volumes., Loeb Classical Library (New York: Putnam's, 1926), 1:6-7; Bk.1, Chap 1.

¹⁰⁸Kemp, p. 7. He quotes the commentator and translator of his English text: "'Succession,' . . . did not merely mean, though it certainly included, the apostolic succession of the bishops of the four great 'thrones,' but rather the whole intellectual, spiritual, and institutional life of the Church. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that Eusebius, like all early church historians, can be understood only if it be recognized that whereas modern writers try to trace the development, growth, and change of doctrines and institutions, their predecessors were trying to prove that nothing of the kind ever happened. According to them the Church had one and only one teaching from the beginning; it had been preserved by the 'Succession' and heresy was the attempt of the Devil to change it."

as Christ's, held together by the framework of history. "In this time of silence between divine events [ascension and parousia], faith and authority can only be founded on the past: Christ and the apostles, who recede each year further from the grasp of present knowledge, into the ungraspable tenuousness of collective memory. The only way to palliate this recession of the focus of faith is to deny psychologically, and subsequently ideologically, the mutability of time and, as mutability is the essence of our experience of time, consequently to deny time itself."¹⁰⁹ Sorting through his sources and explaining his methodology, Eusebius writes, "We shall endeavour to give them unity by historical treatment, rejoicing to rescue the successions, if not of all, at least of the most distinguished of the apostles of our Saviour throughout those churches of which the fame is still remembered."¹¹⁰

By denying the mutability of time, Eusebius offers the first strategy of avoidance. From a Loderian perspective, it can be viewed as a two-dimensional avoidance of an experiential void, a proximate experience of death and loss, created by the accumulation of time away from Christ. Kemp summarizes his point this way:

The elimination of historical mutable time, then, acts as a comforter for those deprived of the direct revelation. Eusebius does of course give a history of events and generations, but his theoretical rhetoric works against the accumulation of years that he chronicles. If the mutable and innovative character of history can be denied, then the believer can achieve a rhetorical, linguistic union with the past, and a linguistic union can become a mystical union. The denial of mutability has a second, related, and essential function: as the authority lies in the past only, any mutation from that past will transform the content of Christian belief, by slow degrees, into something unrecognizable.

...

What Eusebius fears is an Ariadne's thread far too complex to be retraced - a labyrinth of time with convolutions and corners that cut off forever the prospect of where one has been, that leads ever and only inward, away from the light of the divine event and into an interiority of fragmented history. The void that lies behind this rhetoric of union is not so much the impossibility of faith in a history so conceived as its complexity.¹¹¹

What Eusebius seems to fear is the possibility of incoherence, that it cannot be held together. "To keep the world in touch with its monochronically incarnated savior required a radical denial of the movement, the discontinuity of time."¹¹² The experience of historical reality as absence and loss precipitated various responses of denial. For Eusebius, it was characterized by the need to stop the flow of psychological

¹⁰⁹Kemp, p. 8. Eusebius writes, "the names, the number and the age of those who, driven by the desire of innovation to an extremity of error, have heralded themselves as the introducers of Knowledge, falsely so-called, ravaging the flock of Christ unsparingly, like grim wolves." (Kemp, p. 8.)

¹¹⁰Eusebius, 1:8-10; bk. 1, ch1.

¹¹¹Kemp, p. 12, 12-13.

¹¹²Kemp, p. 15. Kemp refers to this fear as the "darkness couched beneath.(p. 14)"

time, to bring history, as it were, to a screeching halt. "Temporal unity [was] the essential balance," Kemp has shown, which he likens to a flying buttress of a cathedral "that holds the great weight and burden of the Church in equilibrium."¹¹³

My reason for drawing our attention to Kemp's study of Eusebius is because it reinforces Pannenberg's argument with regards to the use of history. The experience of history brings with it an awareness of mutability and change, an awareness that for Loder is a participation in the void at the heart of being. Mutability is rooted in the exocentric capacities of the self in the way that "human beings can distance themselves from the immediately given," such as the originating experience of the early church.¹¹⁴ As Loder summarizes Pannenberg, "primordial cultures were preoccupied with trying to withstand chaos and change that was disruptive. The problem was always how to preserve order or, when it broke down, how to reestablish it."¹¹⁵ "For the greatest part of their history," Pannenberg suggests, "human beings dedicated themselves to permanence; only five thousand years ago did they abandon the rule according to which they had lived for hundreds of thousands of years."¹¹⁶ Yet, it was this drive for constancy in the face of chaos that was so evident in the early centuries of the church. I would argue, and believe Loder would concur, that this drive for permanence or coherence continues to have a hold over the human psyche and continues to have a detrimental effect upon the life of the church. Mutability is still considered a threat. Johann Goethe's (1749-1832) Faust shouting "*Verweile Doch!*" - Last Forever! is the cry of the ego cognizant of the mortal truth that "things" do not last, but die.

Kemp has shown how these strategies of avoidance continued from Eusebius through to the Reformation where that sense of absence was heightened. The pattern can be traced from the Reformation right down to the present as the church continues to struggle in its search for the historical Jesus and whether or not historical knowledge can ever be the foundation for faith. If space allowed, we would be able to move through the last fifteen hundred years and substantiate Kemp's claims. Christianity continues to wrestle with the apparent present absence of Christ and the church continues to look to the discipline of history to make that connection. Yet, to rely upon history is a maladaptive response because historical knowledge is build upon absence.

¹¹³Kemp, p. 44. The image is borrowed from Henry Adams' (1838-1918) *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* (1918).

¹¹⁴Pannenberg, p. 490. This is my example, not Pannenberg's.

¹¹⁵Doctoral seminar transcript.

¹¹⁶Pannenberg, pp. 490-491. For example, the main concern of the Sumerian myths "was to resist the destructive powers of chaos and restore the original order of things or, in other words, to undo the fact of historical change. (p. 493)"

V. A Loderian Reading of Historical Existence

It is precisely to this present crisis that Loder's convictional theology has something to say and why his work is so profoundly important. It allows us to get around or through the cognitive barriers that have hindered the church to extend a vision of the Christian life that is both meaningful and transformative.

As we have seen, "There is no possibility for recovering the lost face," Loder says, "without eventually encountering nothingness." The recovering of the lost face is always and only the work of God's grace encountered in a convictional experience of the Holy Spirit after the pattern of Christ's life, death and resurrection. It is the Holy Spirit who grants a four-dimensional human existence and that four-dimensional reality cannot be realized apart from a confrontation with nothingness - with the void. The experience of the Holy "reaches back under the defensive structure of the ego and restores the same conditions for the mature, differentiated personality that the proto-typical facial encounter introduce for the emerging child ego."¹¹⁷ The Holy, mediated in Christ, frees the ego to ground itself in something deeper than itself. Thus the ego discovers that, by trusting God, "its defensive maneuvers are reversible and that the primal absence is now bearable. Indeed it is even gracious because it haunts the self-sufficiency of the ego with constant reminders of its conflicted origins, calling it back again and again into communion with the Face that endures, the Face of God."¹¹⁸

The defensive structures of the ego carry on the work of negation throughout the life-cycle. The self is continually being shaped by the ego that is trying to negate the presence of the void in one's being. The ego cannot tolerate its own annihilation and so it blocks out and seeks to cover over experiences of absence and loss. The self, however, was created to live four-dimensionally, but the adaptive and accommodative strategies of the ego impede the self's desire to experience this, to live in relationship with the Holy in the face of the void. Unless this negating dynamic is itself negated by a force stronger than the ego, the self can never be free to live four-dimensionally. What Loder has identified are psychological dynamics that cannot be divorced from epistemological strategies that continue throughout the life-cycle, which means that all expressions of human thought, because of their origin in the life of a person, can have characteristics of being two-, three-, or four-dimensional.

As a result, two-dimensionality is a face-less existence of the maladaptive ego marked by a "denial of person-centeredness."¹¹⁹ The push to survive even at the expense of people depersonalizes existence. When a person encounters the Holy in the face of Christ, the Holy restores the original impact of the primal, face-to-face encounter of infancy. When the Holy faces an individual, one becomes a self

¹¹⁷*TTM2*, p. 173.

¹¹⁸*TTM2*, pp. 173-174.

¹¹⁹*TTM2*, p. 174.

free from the defensive structures of the ego and the Holy generates "a person-centered life of four-dimensional proportions."¹²⁰ The encounter with the Holy is person to person, and this also yields an outlook whereby the other is no longer an "it," incorporated into the life of the ego, but becomes a thou, a *person*.

Two-dimensionality is governed by fear - fear of death and therefore fear of life. It is the opposite of four-dimensional life, which is graciously ruled by love. "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. (1 John 4:18)" Because fear is the determining emotion of the unredeemed ego, it will push the self into patterns of control and domination, anything that will allow the ego to establish its own security. The self seeks to grab hold of everything - people, things, positions of authority and power, knowledge, texts, even God - and presses everything into a death-grip in service to the ego.

If we take Loder's framework and apply it to the way the church has thought about history and how the church has understood its movement over time, it would seem to me, given our discussion, that the ways we have relied upon the study of history as a foundation for theology are symptomatic of theologians thinking two-dimensionally, and not four-dimensionally. We can say this because the study of history, as we have seen, has been *used* as a tool to reconnect us with the source experience of the church, namely Jesus Christ. The appeal to history becomes a substitute for an encounter with the face of Christ, two-dimensional constructs that seek to overcome the apparent absence of Christ. The study and writing of history are acts after the fact, that seek to regain that which has been lost to the present, due to the flow of time. The trust in and reliance upon the historical pursuit implicitly presupposes a sense of absence and loss, of our inability to connect with Jesus. When the church trusts in history to prove the veracity of its truth claims, it is actually making a confession of doubt. It bespeaks of the church's uncertainty and confusion of identity. This is why the trust in historical truth, which is to some extent a trust in humanity, is functional atheism. A study of the past can enable the functionality of the church, allowing it to continue to function as an institution, but this is no substitute for the life-giving relationship that the human spirit desires and the Holy Spirit longs to give. John Macmurray (1891-1960) makes the trenchant observation that "the historical development of Churches or other institutions in no way guarantees that the original teaching of their founder is retained. Historical continuity is no guarantee of spiritual continuity."¹²¹ Perhaps the appeal to history reflects the possible fear that Jesus is still absent from us, disconnected from us, far removed from the present. Trusting in historical knowledge, this grammar of absence would help to explain why the contemporary church finds itself struggling through a period of self-doubt, brought on by the apparent present absence of Christ within

¹²⁰TTM2, p. 174.

¹²¹John Macmurray, *The Clue to History* (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1938), p. 3.

the church and within the world. In sharp contrast, Loder is an advocate for spiritual presence and continuity above all else - because the spiritual connection with Jesus is fundamentally personal and relational.

Another way of applying Loder's work is to say the history of thought is in many respects the history of the individual writ large, it exposes the deep psychological traumas experienced by the self in its struggle to find meaning in the world free from the ego's dynamic of negation. Recall that Loder believes there is something "inherently wrong with so-called human development. Normal development is psychologically constructed, socially supported, and culturally maintained so that people are drawn out of the full four dimensions of being."¹²² If the search for the Face that will not go away is the ultimate need of every individual *at every stage of the life-cycle*, then the history of collective thought will also reflect that struggle to find the source of meaning for its life at every period of its history. Despite the enormous creative potential of the human spirit there are also maladaptive, defensive structures of the ego which are operative throughout the life-cycle starting with infancy, preventing the self from achieving its goal. These patterns can be observed in the constructions of thought throughout history, in the foiled attempts of human knowledge to connect with the Object of its deepest desire.

For example, if we imagine a time-line representing the history of the church stretching from the first century to the present, and then impose over it the stages of the life-cycle as observed by developmental theorists, we would come up with very interesting comparisons. Erik Erikson's study of human development has shown there are distinct stages or periods through which the ego and the self are developed.¹²³ Generally speaking, these are demarcated as infancy (birth-2), toddler (2-3), oedipal child (3-5), school-age child (6-10), adolescence (11-18), young adulthood (19-35), middle years (36-65), and later years (65+). We will not discuss each of these stages in detail, but each period witnesses an intense struggle of the self to achieve certain "virtues," as Erikson calls them, specific developmental tasks. Each stage is marked by conflict and immense energy as the self tries to make sense of the world. For Loder, each stage, each attempt to make sense, is driven by the power of negation cutting the self off from what it truly desires, intimacy with a loving Other.¹²⁴ The formation of the early church, for example, was a birthing experience, a primal, source experience of its infancy. The constituting experience was the encounter with Jesus Christ who fathered/mothered a new world for them. Before

¹²²TTM2, p. 157.

¹²³Erik Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, Second edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1963). In this context Anthony Kemp's research on the origins of historical consciousness in the early church takes on great significance because it substantiates the presence of a maladaptive cognitive dynamic at work.

¹²⁴James E. Loder, *The Logic of the Spirit: Human Development in Theological Perspective* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998). This is what Loder refers to as the "triumph of negation."

becoming a toddler, the infancy period ends with ferocious intensity as a child seeks to say *NO* to the presence of the constituting other (parent) because the child has discovered that the parent will not always be present, the face goes away (which is a proximate form of loss). The "terrible twos" are positive in that they enable a child to achieve autonomy, but at an extraordinary cost. A two-year-old wants continuity with the parent even as he seeks to be independent. In a similar way, as we saw earlier, the church also wrestled with the question of identity and continuity as it saw itself moving away from the source experience of the church.

We will not touch upon every stage of development, but if we skip to the toddler years we will see that they are typified by a child's need for conformity, sameness, and the need to fit in. Notions of history used by the church, for example, to stop the temporal flow and counter heresy, would reflect a toddler stage. The intellectual and technical accomplishments of the Renaissance and Reformation periods represent the prodigious achievements of the school boy discovering the world afresh. These are years of extraordinary productivity. This is the era, we recall, that witnessed the birth of the historical sciences. The presuppositions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with its drive toward self-reliance, skepticism, and individualism are typical of the adolescent who is questioning the world, seeking autonomy, and displaying an attitude of arrogance that is critical of any authority or tradition, all of which is an overcompensation for the anxiety of puberty. Historical knowledge was used as a way to question authority and undermine the traditions of the church. The modern period has given way to what is being described as postmodern, a kind of young adulthood where we are learning that the self is not the center of the universe. In the postmodern world, all knowledge has become relative, including historical knowledge, with no basis for truth. Characteristic of adulthood is living with ambiguity and the unknown, but this too is an expression of absence and cannot be tolerated for long, because marriage, the raising of children, and career are all "used" as a way to make sense of absence that is at the heart of being and to keep the sense of absence at a distance. If these observations have any correspondence to reality, then inevitably postmodernism will yield to other epistemological strategies reflective of the developmental needs in the stages in the life-cycle.

We need to remember, though, that *negation* is operative in the early experiences of the infant. The experience of negation (keeping the void at bay) builds momentum across the individual life-cycle. Similarly, the dynamic of negation continues to build throughout the Western historical process contributing to further experiences of untold horror and destruction, such wide-scale brutality that humanity has never witnessed before in its history. Before our existential awareness of absence we continue to search for epistemological strategies that enable us to connect with the source of life, which offers meaning to our lives (both personally and collectively in the culture) that we cannot establish for

ourselves.¹²⁵ The drive of the human spirit is creative, but it is fallible and cannot get beyond the limits of the ego. The result is always what Loder has called "a truth producing error."¹²⁶

This was certainly the case for in Hegel's obsession with the philosophy of history.¹²⁷ Often left unexamined are the motivations for his need to develop a philosophy of history. George Lukács is one of many commentators who sees Hegel's philosophy as a "response to loss."¹²⁸ In his masterful study, Charles Taylor notes that, "Much in the writings of Hegel and his contemporaries can be explained by the need to come to terms with the painful, perturbing, conflict-ridden moral experience of the French Revolution." The breakdown of the social order, combined with the power of Kantianism, which attempted to establish a strict separation of *noumena* from *phenomena*, all contributed to the crisis of "human subjectivity and its relation to the world."¹²⁹ Hegel's thought is his answer to a world marked by diremption, division, and fragmentation. The Europe he knew was falling apart, intellectual shifts were tearing asunder his rational world. It is in such a context that Hegel developed his picture of history. There was a loss of primal connection and return was inconceivable. The "spiral of history" brings us not to the past, but a future guided by the spirit (*Geist*) who overcomes the loss by positing

¹²⁵I have not found any other attempt to see in development theory a way to interpret trends in the evolution of human thought, with the possible exception of Wyand de Kock, "Fowler and Faithful Change," *Scriptura* 72 (2000): 87-95. Here de Kock applies the stages of *faith* development theory as conceived by James Fowler (which was shaped by Erikson's stage theory) as a way to understand "transitions in cultural consciousness" throughout history. For Fowler, individuating-reflexive faith (the faith stance of a young adult) is characteristically overconfident and critical of authority, typical of the Enlightenment period. Conjunctive faith (the faith stance of a person in mid-life) possesses an "epistemological humility," and sees this approach in the work of Michael Polanyi, Paul Ricoeur, Jürgen Habermas (b. 1929), and Niels Bohr (1885-1962).

¹²⁶James E. Loder, "Negation and Transformation: A Study in Theology and Human Development," Christianne Brusselmans, ed. *Toward Moral and Religious Maturity: The First International Conference on Moral and Religious Development* (Morristown, NJ: Silver Burdett Co., 1980), p. 178

¹²⁷Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, Preface by Charles Hegel and the translator, J. Sibree; A new Introduction by Professor C. J. Friedrich (New York: Dover Publications, 1956).

¹²⁸Cited in John E. Grumley, *History & Totality: Radical Historicism from Hegel to Foucault* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 1. "The unified totality of immediate, meaningful social experience characterising integrated, closed societies had begun to dissolve," Grumley points out, and sees Hegel's work as an, "Utopian aim of philosophy to theoretically impose the lost unity, to overcome the rifts between essence and appearance, subject and object engendered by historical conditions. . . . The idea of a totalising historical process can be viewed as a modern reaction to a later, seemingly permanent historical crisis: the epochal transition to dynamic, bourgeois socio-economic relations and forms.(p. 1)"

¹²⁹Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 3, 36ff.

something new.¹³⁰ Thus, as John E. Grumley observes, "Hegel's first tentative moves toward a philosophy of history escaped the practical dilemmas of pessimistic retreat into a lost, idealised past. Anticipating radical historical possibilities, he projected his vision of a revitalized, unified, harmonious culture into an immediate future with the grasp of the revolutionary present."¹³¹ Whether or not Hegel was actually successful in offering that unity is questionable. What is important here is to see the instrumental use of history and the way it develops out of one's personal, subjective experience of absence and loss.¹³²

Our search for Jesus, this desire to connect with the Jesus of history *and* of faith, possesses many of the same dynamics of the self's search for the face that will not go away. Our pursuit of the originating, generative experience encountered by the first Christians who experienced Christ face-to-face is very similar to the same pattern of the self looking for the primal experience of the face. Both source experiences yield life and meaning. The face-to-face encounter of the developing child serves as the foundational experience throughout life. The implications of a loss of the face, however, are also operative throughout the life-cycle. As we saw above, the face is the center of the personality "innately sought by a child and the focus of the earliest sense of one's humanity." The face is a symbol of wholeness and through that early facial encounter "a child seeks a *cosmic-ordering, self-confirming impact from the presence of a loving other*."¹³³ If the ultimate loving Other, the face after which all humanity longs, is, Jesus Christ, then how much more important and informative was the experience of the first Christians. For the first Christians, and we see this particularly in Paul's writing, it was the encounter with Jesus as person, and what was revealed through the transformative encounter with him, face-to-face, that formed the basis of this primal experience. "For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine

¹³⁰Taylor, pp. 35, 44ff.

¹³¹Grumley, p. 15.

¹³²In the postmodern era, Michel Foucault (1926-1984) saw the drive toward totalisation as an "agent of oppression and normalization," limiting freedom for the individual. (Grumley, pp. 207-208). Whereas Hegel's philosophy was generally optimistic of human potential, Foucault in contrast sees it as a pessimistic vision for human life. Here, Foucault reflects the belief of the *Geisteswissenschaften* philosophers such as Wilhelm Windelband (1848-1915) and Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) who saw the totalisation as a force of de-personalisation, where the individual is secondary to the universal. The search for laws, rules and patterns in historical research, even the presence of an historical conscious are for Foucault significations that humanity has lost its bearing in the world and has become dehistoricized. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), pp. 367-373. The nineteenth century's obsession is a dialectic of loss and retrieval. "[N]ineteenth century man did not discover history: he needed to discover history, or, as it were to remake history on his own terms." Stephan Bann, "The Sense of the Past: Image, Text, and Object in the Formation of Historical Consciousness," in H. Aram. Veaser, Editor, *The New Historicism* (New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 103-104.

¹³³Loder, p. 163. Italics in the text.

out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:6)" Paul's desire and yearning was to know Christ "face to face," the promise extended to him by virtue of the resurrection (1 Corinthians 13:12). The delay of the parousia can be viewed as removal of the face of Jesus, an absence that threw the church into a major crisis.

Loder's convictional theology thus leads us to submit that perhaps the church's appeal to history to reconnect with Christ can be seen as a kind of *functional* solution to an *existential* problem. A preoccupation with history takes us away from Christ. This is an extremely important point, because unless this pattern is identified, notions of history and our experience of historical existence will remain two-dimensional. The existential problem is a question of being, namely, a human being's fundamental desire to connect with Christ. The longing within the self for the Face of God is deep and powerful. This is why Loder's emphasis upon the search for the face is so incredibly important to us here. Whether considering Christian discipleship or if one is already a Christian, an individual is always searching for the face of Christ, the facial encounter that not only affirms our belief in Christ but also transforms our lives.

It now becomes clearer why Loder makes the point that "there is no possibility for recovering the lost face . . . without eventually encountering nothingness." When we encounter the Holy in the face of Jesus Christ, "the experience reaches back under the defensive structure of the ego and restores the same conditions for the mature, differentiated personality that the prototypical facial encounter introduced for the emerging child ego."¹³⁴ In the face-to-face encounter with Christ, the ego is not destroyed, but is recentered and grounded in Christ. Many of our philosophies and theologies of history have been forged out of this desperate desire to grasp, to grab hold of one who was once past. They are two-dimensional attempts of the ego in the face of the experienced absence of Christ. There can be no substitute for the original face of Christ, any such attempt is, thus, a functional solution to an existential problem.

How do we, therefore, connect with the person Jesus Christ? How do we address this essential existential question? The existential problem of distance can only be 'solved' through the realization that the transforming reality of the first Christians was a result of an experience of the Holy, whether with Jesus Christ or the Spirit of Christ. In this sense, the New Testament's account of encounters with Jesus were four-dimensional experiences. They were experiences in which the self was constituted *vis-à-vis* a world in which life is affirmed and granted by the Holy in the face of the void. If true, authentic reality is constituted four-dimensionally from an encounter with the Holy, if reality is established through the revelatory experience of the Holy, then we are forced to re-examine the 'what' and the 'how' of history. That is, if the study of history does not allow us to connect with the Holy, but the Holy instead

¹³⁴Loder, p. 173.

encounters humanity in its historicity, then we need to re-think the nature of historical reality. If the totality of history is the face of the void, then a four-dimensional experience of reality must be established by the Holy beyond the power of the void. This will shape the way we look at the study of history and its real "uses" for theology. It will also color the way we see ourselves moving through time, that is, the way we experience reality, relate to the past, and face the future.

Once again, the study of history cannot be the means of connecting us with Jesus Christ. A study of the past will not bring us any closer to him. For he is not in the past, which is the place of the dead. He is not relegated to a specific moment in time which is no more. The voice of the angel to the women at the tomb remains the voice to any age, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" (Luke 24:5).

A living faith is rooted in a living Lord who is not confined to the dead past but who encounters the living in the present. Jesus is found not only in the present, but goes before us. That is why it is futile to go back to where he was, for we will not find him there. We cannot find the living among the dead. "For he is not here," as the angel said before the tomb (Matthew 28:6). The resurrection of Jesus points to a new Reality that tells us that we cannot encounter him where he once was, in the past. That place will be empty. Indeed, the shift is a radical one. For we will not find him in the past, but in the future, for "he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him (Matthew 28:7)." The Resurrection radically reorients the way reality is construed, thus it grants a new reality grounded in the revelation.

Earlier we noted Hegel's claim that the task of the historian is "to hold fast what is dead."¹³⁵ If Loder is correct, then to embrace that which is dead requires at some level the ability to take on one's own death. But can the ego really bear this? There is physical death as well as proximate forms of death. Any experience of loss and absence, including the past, is experienced by the ego as a reminder of its eventual annihilation. Loder wants us to look at the void and not deny its presence. There is no room for fantasy, myth, or false views of reality, no room of avoidance of any kind, no room for anything that denies the life-giving Spirit from granting life. This is because the cross stands at the center of the Christian life and this life in the Spirit is continually pointing toward the crosses we experience in human experience. There is no way to escape the absolute horror and violence in life, the pain and senseless suffering of life. Yet, the ego tries to create a world that composes out the horror by trying to live "as if" it were not the case. But the void continues to encroach upon reality. For there are aspects of reality that the ego cannot bear to look, cannot tolerate, will not face. There are occurrences in the human experience so ghastly that no imaginative reconstruction will allow us to tell it "as it actually happened." Who will ever be able to reconstruct the past and tell us what actually happened on the cross when Christ faced the void of death and sin? What human being has the ability to give voice to *that* horror? Only the Holy can allow us to face death itself and through the negation of death's power, grant us life. Only

¹³⁵Cited in Edith Wyschogrod, *An Ethics of Remembering: History, Heterology, and the Nameless Others* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. ix.

the Holy gives one the ability to compose a view of the world that includes and yet is not ultimately defined by the void.¹³⁶

In contrast to Hegel, the task of the theologian is not "to hold fast what is dead," but *to be held fast by One who is living*. Loder's theology is an articulation of the gracious grammar of the presence of God who speaks in and through Christ into the void of our being and offers new life in the face of death. God's grammar of presence speaks into our fallen grammars of absence, making even absence itself the bearer of the Spirit's life. If the starting point for the historian is death, then the starting point for the theologian must be life - the resurrected life of Christ. As we have seen throughout, Loder's work helps us to see that there is something fundamentally wrong with the way we have understood our connection with the past and the way we have conceived of our movement within space-time. Therefore, it must be asked whether absence and void are appropriate starting points for a theological understanding of the Christian life?

Loder's relational phenomenological pneumatology provides a helpful corrective by understanding the *Holy Spirit as making the apparently absent Christ present to the modern day believer*. Such a theology would be grounded in the view that a reality historically constructed cannot supersede one that is constituted by Christ - the One who not only entered into the temporal flow of time-space and dwelt among us, but who continues to shape our present historical experience and dwells with us through his Spirit. Historical knowledge constituted four-dimensionally by the mediating presence of the Risen Christ becomes a *grammar of presence*. This pneumatology envisions the work of the Holy Spirit as One who seeks to free us from our myopic views of reality by extending a knowledge of reality that comes from beyond us, through a relational experience which in actuality *frees* us to become truly historical by putting us *into* the flow of space-time - that is, entrenched in an authentic historical reality as defined by Christ. Loder's multi-dimensional schema provides a hermeneutic of reality that is grounded pneumatologically and therefore, is invaluable to the theologian.

VI. Historical Existence and Four-Dimensionality

The question remains for Loder: If Jesus Christ is the object of our personal encounter, how do we know him in a way that does not separate us from him? Even this language is problematic, for Christ certainly is more than an *object* of human study. The content of faith is a person, a *subject*. Driving a sharp wedge between subject and object, typical of a Kantian epistemology, is phenomenologically

¹³⁶Rowan Williams speaks of the crucifixion as something that cannot be easily categorized or explained in strictly human terms. "...the union of divine and human interest must be affirmed and understood at just that point where the sheer historical vulnerability of the human is most starkly shown, where unfinishedness, tension, the rejection of meaning and community are displayed in the figure of a man simultaneously denied voice or identity by the religious and political rationalities of his day." "Hegel and the gods of postmodernity," in Philippa Berry and Andrew Wernick, Editors. *Shadow of Spirit: Postmodernism and Religion*, (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 78.

misleading. For Jesus Christ is not a *Ding-an-sich*, one who can be objectified and then studied and examined. This is because the object of faith is a subject. We can hold from a critically-realist (Polanyian) standpoint that God's revelation of Godself in the life of Jesus is objectively true. But the *medium* of the revelation is a person, Jesus Christ. The revelation points to the saving activity of God in Jesus Christ, therefore we must not depersonalize the activity in forgetting that the revelation was experienced in and through and mediated by Jesus in his humanity. The activity of Christ cannot be divorced from his personality, for his action was an extension of who he was and is, grounded in his identity as fully God and fully human. The disciples encountered a person, which means that the pattern of our knowledge of Jesus must retain this personal element, a knowledge determined by the 'subject matter,' by the person. When the person Jesus is objectified, that is when his life is viewed as an event of the past, transposed and broken down into a fact of history to be studied, then we have moved very far from him, indeed, and the distance can appear to be great. For we must remember, as Karl Barth (1886-1968) made clear in his work, we know through Jesus Christ that God is also Subject who encounters humanity as the Object of God's grace. "God comes before us as the one who addresses us and who is to be addressed in return." God is the "I" who addresses humanity as "thou" and to whom we say "Thou" in response.¹³⁷

Our discussion throughout substantiates Loder's identification of the "gaps" in all knowing events and the power of the "eikonic eclipse to cut the knower off from an accurate apprehension of one's experience of reality. An eikonic eclipse, we will recall, is "a theory of error in which rationalist assumptions about truth cut off reason from its generative resources in personal knowledge and the imagination."¹³⁸ The emergence of gap imagery and the sense of distance are the results of human constructions of reality, a construction of the human mind shaped by the existential experience of distance, the knower cut off from the 'object' of the past due to constructs of reality informed by an emerging historical consciousness. Perhaps we experience this sense of distance and have difficulties bridging the subject-object divide because the gap is a projection of the gap within the human knower.¹³⁹ In this light, we can view them as maladaptive rationalist strategies trying to accomplish what only personal knowledge and imagination can offer.

Loder's work stresses the point that the subject-object divide is present in all forms of human

¹³⁷Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), p. 58.

¹³⁸*TTM2*, pp. 27-30, 223.

¹³⁹James Brown, *Subject and Object in Modern Theology* (New York: Macmillan, 1955) also points to this phenomenon. "It is part of our situation that we are inevitably and inescapably *inside the* knowledge relation, from the start and to the end, and so cannot step outside of ourselves to an indifferent standpoint from which to view and adjust the relations of thought and being. Thought and being are together from the beginning.(p. 170)" Italics in the text.

knowledge and cannot be bridged by the human knower participating in reality. Because this is so, then theologically it must be asserted that there is no way to span this division when it comes to our knowledge of God. Loder makes a considerable contribution by recasting the way we think about the problem of distance. Drawing upon the rich imagery of the Cappadocian fathers who were able to hold in creative tension the humanity and divinity of Jesus, who were able to conceive of ways in which polarities were held together, Loder affirms that the same Chalcedonian pattern is at work today through the Spiritual Presence of Christ who mediates reality for the believer.

*[P]syhic structures or structures of knowing that unite extreme opposites are fundamental to the imaginative vision of Jesus Christ. He himself united God and humanity, the universal and the particular, life of life and death of death, the depths of hell with the heights of heaven, sin and holiness, human wretchedness and divine glory, the beginning and the end - the list could be continued. However, Christ's being far exceeds any analysis of opposites because no mere consequence of analysis is able to make the Christian difference; it is Presence, personal and transfiguring the dark face of sheer balance into the 'light of his countenance,' that makes the difference Responding to a sense of his Presence, we know intuitively, if not immediately in an image, as if lightning had flashed across the sky and illuminated his face, that his Presence unites all things without confusing or dissolving anything. As he initiates and mediates so he will bring to complete and final conclusion all things in himself; so mediation is not merely the way by which a human being is transformed but a disclosure to any who can "see" of all that is to come.*¹⁴⁰

What Loder is describing here is a four-dimensionally grounded reality constituted by the Spirit when an individual faces the Holy in the loving face of Christ and discovers reality beyond the gaps, voids, distances and absences of experience. For the love of God, said Barth, "always throws a bridge over a crevasse. It is always the light shining out of the darkness."¹⁴¹ As we have seen, the interpersonal dynamic is central to Loder's work. But this *knowing event* is not just a knowledge about a person, it entails an encounter with the person Jesus, through the intimacy of the Spirit. It is at this juncture that Loder's pneumatology has the most to say about the structure of reality and calls us to reframe the way we think about the Christian life, with far-reaching implications for the church and its ministry.

Let us take up a consideration of this phrase: *As if lightning had flashed across the sky and illuminated his face*. This statement is more than Loder trying to be poetic; he is being very literal. That light is the Holy Spirit who illuminates the face of Jesus Christ, "the light of humanity" (John 1:5). Even as the properties of light are not limited to space-time but are themselves constituted *vis-à-vis* their relationship to light, so too is the Christian life constituted by one's present relationship with Christ. The relationship between the person Jesus and the Christian is not determined or hindered by temporal

¹⁴⁰TTM2, p. 147.

¹⁴¹Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/1, 278.

distance or a difference in physical location.¹⁴² Instead, Loder wants to reinforce the idea that the Christian experience involves a "radical view of space and time," a position that is backed up by theories of contemporary physics.

Loder's ideas are informed by Thomas F. Torrance's writings on the relational properties of light. Loder makes the fullest use of Torrance in *The Knight's Move*.¹⁴³ The discovery that light is a relation of particle to wave was made by Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg. Torrance wants make a comparison between the characteristics and properties of light and the way we conceive of God as Light.¹⁴⁴ Light is the most "refined form of matter." As such it has "a unique role in linking and coordinating them all together within its rational harmony. In this way through the discovery of light, by reference to which the whole space-time framework of empirical reality is to be understood, modern physics has brought us to the conception of the universe as *a universe of light*."¹⁴⁵ The structures of reality are revealed even as they are constituted by light.¹⁴⁶ Torrance suggests that the behavior of created light is "a reflection of the uncreated and unlimited Light which God himself is."¹⁴⁷

Relying on the work of James Clerk Maxwell (1831-1870) and Albert Einstein (1879-1955), Torrance has made several important comparisons between the created light of the universe and the uncreated Light of God.¹⁴⁸ Let us look at two, in particular. One of the remarkable characteristics of light is that "physical light itself has no need of a medium such as 'ether' to support its transmission." Light is contingent upon light alone. Torrance projects this idea onto an understanding of God as light

¹⁴²TKM, p. 206.

¹⁴³TKM, , pp. 194ff.

¹⁴⁴"This is not to say that the Light of God may be understood only as it depends on and is conditioned by created light as a necessary medium and carrier for its movement." Thomas F. Torrance, *Christian Theology and Scientific Culture* (Belfast: Christian Journals, Ltd.), p. 77.

¹⁴⁵Torrance, p. 76.

¹⁴⁶"The immense extent of the universe, judged by the time it takes rays of light to traverse it at the fantastic speed of about 186,000 miles per second, it utterly overwhelming. Judged by the same standard, the finite speed of light, the universe is finite, yet since it is found to be continuously expanding at a rate approaching the speed of light, it is also unbounded in a double sense: it extends its boundaries and breaks through the bound of our comprehension." Torrance, p. 77.

¹⁴⁷Torrance, p. 77. See "Theology of Light: A University Sermon," *The Christian Frame of Mind: Reason, Order, and Openness in Theology and Natural Science*, Introduction by W. Jim Neidhardt (Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers & Howard, 1989), pp. 147-155.

¹⁴⁸Maxwell: "On Physical Lines of Forces" (1861-1862), "Illustrations of the Dynamical Theory of Gases" (1860) and "A Dynamical Model of the Electromagnetic Field" (1865); Einstein: "Theory of Special Relativity" *Annalen der Physik* (1905) and four other papers published in *Annalen der Physik* (1916).

and provides a helpful insight into the possible way God relates to the created order. "How much less does the creative Light of God, which is the source of all light and all intelligible media in the universe, need any means of transmission other than its own force to reach us!"¹⁴⁹

The second observation has to do with the *constancy* of light. Light is always moving in empty space at a constant velocity. "It is important to realise," Torrance notes, "that the constancy of the speed of light in all systems is not a derivative but an ultimate principle with an independence of its own. While all entities and events in the universe are defined relationally in terms of time and space, and space and time are defined relationally in terms of light, light is not defined by reference to any contingent reality beyond itself. In other words, 'light has a unique metaphysical status in the universe.'"¹⁵⁰ One's perspective on the physical universe changes *vis-à-vis* one's relation to light¹⁵¹. What this means is that, "No one can be in a privileged position, for the speed of light in different systems of time and place, of which one is in motion relative to another, remains constant."¹⁵²

Einstein's view of light, as expressed in the theory of relativity, when used as a possible way of imagining God's relationship with and in the universe has far-reaching implications for the way we think about reality and historical existence. Torrance summarizes his view in the following way:

[T]hrough the constancy of its immense and unsurpassable speed and its supremacy over all space and time, light behaves in the same equable way toward all that takes

¹⁴⁹Torrance, p. 77. "Analogies, comparisons or illustrations taken from created realities are properly employed, not to bring our understanding of the Creator within the measure of our creaturely conceptions, but rather to aid the expression and communication of what we apprehend apart from them. On the other hand, the point must be made that, far from discounting or depreciating created light, uncreated Light constitutes the ultimate ground of its intelligibility and as such establishes it and gives it its true value. Apart from such a basis in uncreated Light all our experience and knowledge of things in the universe would finally be meaningless, for they would be devoid of any ultimate standards of truth, goodness or beauty. (p. 78)"

¹⁵⁰Torrance, p. 78. This is Einstein's discovery that the speed of light remains constant "irrespective of any motion in its source or of any motion on the part of the observer. (p. 78)"

¹⁵¹"All things naturally appear different to different observers, for they are relative to their perceptions and their positions in space and time, but the staggering fact about light is that the constancy of its speed remains the same for all observers through all those relativities, no matter where they are or how fast or slow they may move." Torrance, p. 79

¹⁵²"Since this implies that one observer's time is different from another observer's time - really and not just apparently different, for space and time cannot be separated from one another but constitute a continual indivisible field - it became clear to Einstein that the notions of absolute space and time of classical physics, which constituted a homogenous unchanging system, had to be dismantled and that the concepts of space and time had to be rethought very radically as relative features of actual on-going events contingent upon the propagation of light. (p. 79)" Einstein never completely broke free from a classical metaphysical view, see John Polkinghorne's Gifford Lectures of 1993-1994, *The Faith of a Physicist: Reflections of a Bottom-Up Thinker* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996). Lyndon F. Harris, "Divine Action: An Interview with John Polkinghorne," *Cross Currents*, 48 (1998):1

place within the universe, and as such provides an invariant and reliable, while dynamic, base, for all its regularity and order. It should be appreciated that invariance is a realist and not a determinist concept. It has nothing to do with the rigid necessity that characterised the static structure of causal connections imposed on our understanding of nature by the framework of absolute isotropic time and space. Rather does invariance refer to a dynamic relatedness inherent in the empirical universe which through the space-time metrical field gives objective, reliable configuration to all our experiences within it. Thus the unique and central role of the speed of light and its uniform constancy enable modern science to interpret and explain the phenomena of nature with a profounder and more unrestricted notion of objectivity than was possible for classical physics.¹⁵³

Let us now apply Torrance's observations.

The Johannine attestation of Jesus as "light," as one who like God is light, now becomes more than an adjectival identification. That is, if we conceive of the light of God pouring through the face of Jesus Christ, who is himself light, and apply to these theological statements what we have come to know of the properties of light, certain conclusions can be made. Jesus as light would be seen as the constant of the universe. As that constant, all individual perspectives in and of space-time would be relative to the movement of that light. All is contingent upon one's relation to the light. Jesus, as light, is not "derivative," such as through historical study, but "ultimate principle." Jesus is the light through which all history is seen and cannot be "defined by reference to any contingent reality beyond itself," although all that is experienced is done so through the relational encounter with Jesus as light. If we carry this further, we see that the number of varied observers or witnesses does not distract from the integrity of Jesus as light. One's perspective changes depending upon one's relationship with Jesus, but the relationship or perspective does not change the essence of Jesus who is light. There is no one who has a "privileged position."

Jesus as light is not bound by space and time, for space and time themselves are defined and constituted through the relational encounter with the constancy of Jesus' presence throughout all space and time. Just as light is part of the created order and lights up the universe, yet is not defined by the universe, so too is Jesus the light of the world, who illumines our reality in such a way that he cannot be defined or limited by the created order. Jesus participates in space-time even at the same time he reveals and opens up, that is allows us "to see" our lives within time-space.

As constant, the light of the universe is the grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ whose inexorable faithfulness remains in place for all space-time. The light of God's grace shapes and creates the field of space-time, but is not controlled by contingencies of space-time. Comparing the constancy of light with the grace of God, Torrance writes,

the transcendent and invariant operation of divine Grace bears upon human life and history in such a way that it is not entangled or tied to or conditioned by the spatio-temporal relations, empirical structures or inter-personal reciprocities in our creaturely

¹⁵³Torrance, p. 80.

existence, but remains supreme above them all. Strange and astonishing as we may find it, God makes all things operate together for good, regardless of the divergencies of human reactions to his saving Love, because his Grace is so sovereignly free and unlimited in its possibilities that in his interaction with humanity God provides the invariant but dynamically objective Ground for the fulfillment of his eternal purpose in the creation. Thus far from being antinomian, the unconditional Grace of God acts in such a creative and redemptive way upon human life and history that it makes them, and indeed all that takes place within the creation, serve the invariant laws of God's eternal love.¹⁵⁴

Discoveries in physics over the last century, therefore, open up for us new ways of thinking about the created order.¹⁵⁵ Dualistic and mechanistic understandings of time and space have to yield to a relational model in which time and space are relationally constituted by the constancy of and relationship to light. Thus, instead of space and time, we need to think of space-time operating in a type of *field* that is *caused* by space-time in relation to light. Static structures of time and space, built upon causal connections must give way to more dynamic ways of conceiving the empirical world, particularly reality.¹⁵⁶

This is why Loder continually affirms "the irreducible relationality of reality."¹⁵⁷ He makes this claim from his reading of Torrance, as well as Michael Polanyi, Albert Einstein, and Jean Piaget. But more than anyone, he sees this interpretative framework in Kierkegaard. The relational phenomenology that we saw previously in Kierkegaard and used in his formation of the *analogia spiritus*, we find here in Loder's consideration of light. Even as relationality pervades the universal constant of light (wave-particle), Kierkegaard pointed to the "the relation of the observer to that observed. . . and the relation of the observer to him or herself."¹⁵⁸ This is the operating dynamic of the "strange loop" that we discussed in the last chapter. For Kierkegaard stressed that "the Universal Constant" – "the Light," is "ultimately relational," Loder suggests, "in that all created relations are related to the uncreated relationality, the

¹⁵⁴Torrance, p. 86. "Grace may be described as the consistently free and unreserved self-giving of God in love to all alike, which is not conditioned or controlled in any way whatsoever by the worth of its object. It is the constant and ceaseless out-flow of the Love of God which has no other reason for its movement than the Love that God is, and is therefore entirely without respect of persons and irrespective of their reactions. (p. 84)"

¹⁵⁵Thomas F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969); Ilya Prigogine, *The End of Certainty: Time, Chaos, and the New Laws of Nature*. In collaboration with Isabelle Stenger (New York: The Free Press, 1996).

¹⁵⁶Torrance speaks of this as "a relativity of simultaneity, which relativity theory has brought to light and which seems to contradict the common sense notions which we generate within the split space and time of everyday experience." *Transformation and Convergence in the Frame of Knowledge: Explorations in the Interrelation of Scientific and Theological Enterprise* (Belfast: Christian Journals, Ltd., 1984), p. 342.

¹⁵⁷TKM, p. 183.

¹⁵⁸TKM, p. 183.

Holy Trinity." Kierkegaard takes the "pervasive relationality already evident in the created order to its ultimate conclusion." So that "the ultimate relationality inherent in the Divine uncreated nature precedes in the order of being and becoming the pervasive relationality of the created order."¹⁵⁹

Consequently, we are led to the other major theme in Loder's thought with regards to historical existence, what he refers to as "time-embeddedness" and the kinetic view of reality. It was Einstein who recognized "the inseparability of time and space relative to the speed of light. . . ." But Loder also sees this pattern at work in Kierkegaard's understanding of human existence before the presence of God. "Kierkegaard's abandonment of any point of 'absolute rest' for human existence in relation to the God-man generated a 'kinetic' view of reality that can only be fully appreciated by recognizing its fundamental consistency with Einstein's universe."¹⁶⁰

By *kinesis* (κίνησις) we mean a way of knowing that is not locked into specific events or moments in space-time, but is dynamic and flowing. This way of thinking is at the center of Albert Einstein's (1879-1955) understanding of "kinematics," or a "kinetic mode of reasoning," whereby knowledge of the physical universe is not known from a position of rest, but from one's relation to the speed of light.¹⁶¹ Although he affirms that Jesus was a "definite historical person," the salvific power of Kierkegaard's experience as a Christian is grounded not through a study of the past, but through an *encounter*, a personal relationship with the "God-man, Jesus Christ." Kierkegaard's encounter is not with a distant historical figure, but one who is still present to him within his own time. The significance of what happened in and through the life of Christ was not viewed simply as an event, that occurred *in* time. There is no denying the fact that in the incarnation God identifies with the temporal process through Christ and does not withdraw from the temporal process. What is most important about the incarnation, that God took on flesh in Jesus Christ, is that people encountered a person, namely Jesus: the God-man. Kierkegaard does not consign him to a past, but views the God-man accessible to every man and woman, not bound by time or space. Thomas F. Torrance stresses the point that "Kierkegaard succeeds in penetrating into the inner logic of the incarnation as bound up with temporal movement (*kinesis*), but

¹⁵⁹TKM, p. 183.

¹⁶⁰TKM, p. 184. Loder continues: "This is not too surprising if we remember, as T. F. Torrance has taught us, that Athanasius [c.296-377] and later the Cappadocian church fathers, especially Gregory of Nazianzus [330-389], entertained this view of existence in relation to God and the universe within the first three centuries after Christ. Of course, the language was different, but what was in the Christian tradition from its beginning drew upon concepts of God and create that were also in Judaism. Perhaps it is only as the origins of the Judeo-Christian tradition surface with those who are faithful to its essence that the partial answers from the medieval, Reformation, and Enlightenment periods can be transformed and the original vision restored with accurate contemporary significance. (p. 184)"

¹⁶¹Thomas F. Torrance, *Transformation and Convergence in the Frame of Knowledge: Explorations in the Interrelations of Scientific and Theological Enterprise*, (Belfast: Christian Journals Limited, 1984), p. 278.

this raises the basic question as to the appropriate mode of the reason with which to grasp the movement of truth. So a hundred years ahead of his time Kierkegaard devised a way of thinking by abandoning a point of absolute rest and moving kinetically along with the truth in order to understand it."¹⁶²

This is why the obstacles of historical knowledge or the gap of time do not hinder Kierkegaard's ability to encounter the God-man because the very nature of the incarnation itself refigures the way we conceptualize the relationality of eternity and time. That the incarnation occurred at one point in time and is still accessible by faith because of the ongoing presence of Christ throughout time calls for shift in the way history or time is constituted. Kierkegaard contends:

...it will always prove when becoming a Christian in truth comes to mean to become contemporary with Christ. And if becoming a Christian does not come to mean this then all the talk of becoming a Christian is nonsense and self-deception and conceit, in part even blasphemy and sin against the Second Commandment of the Law and sin against the Holy Ghost.

For in relation to the absolute there is only one tense: the present. For him who is not contemporary with the absolute - for him it has no existence. And as Christ is the absolute, it is easy to see that with respect to Him there is only one situation: that of contemporaneity.¹⁶³

By encountering the God-man as a contemporary, Kierkegaard believed he lived in the life *shaped by* the encounter, thus participating in the "act" of God's revelation in Christ and temporally relating to it within his own time. One moves through time as one engages with eternity which constitutes the boundaries of times, itself. For the person of faith, there is no distance as the historical Jesus continues to encounter him as historical, in the Spirit. Kierkegaard's "passionate leap of faith" across Lessing's "ugly, broad ditch (*garstiger breiter Graben*)," is an example of kinesis.¹⁶⁴ This is more than a subjective

¹⁶²Torrance, p. 278. *TKM*, p. 129, 183-184.

¹⁶³Kierkegaard, *Training in Christianity*, p. 67. Kierkegaard also discusses this idea at length in the section entitled "The Situation of the Contemporary Follower," in *Philosophical Fragments/Johannes Climacus*, Edited and Translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong with Introduction and Notes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 55ff.

¹⁶⁴Cf. Gordon E. Michalson, Jr. *Lessing's "Ugly Ditch": A Study of Theology and History*. (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1985). *TKM*, pp. 134ff. While one cannot deny the fact that Christian faith stands in *some* relation to history, Michalson makes the strong case that the way we have been thinking about the relationship in terms set up by Lessing have led to the present-day "impasse and frustration." We are suffering from "a theological illness." The "employment of ditch imagery in the discussion of faith and history is itself the chief symptom" of a disease in theology's ability to come to grips with historical revelation. "The deeper issue really is not even that we suffer from the disease of confusion, but that we are unaware that we suffer from it. In a situation such as this, something closer to conversion than to therapy is probably called for. At any rate, a true "cure" here would not consist of a "solution" to the "problem of faith and history," but an emerging sense of ironic detachment toward the way in which we have traditionally conceptualized the problem. (pp. viii-ix)" The conceptualization of the problem cannot begin with philosophical presuppositions or historiographical methods. "The wrong topic. . . is criticism and the procedures of historical research

projection upon the nature of reality. For Kierkegaard it is real. Kierkegaard's ability to reconceptualize the historicity of his being informed by his encounter with the God-man is one attempt to bridge all gaps. This encounter is real for Loder, too.

Thus, Loder applies his bipolar-relational model to the way we kinetically experience both eternity (in the presence of God) and history. There is a sharp distinction between eternity and history, but also a unity. This is not possible "without the passionate appropriation by the believer of the relationality revealed in the nature of Jesus Christ."¹⁶⁵ It is within this context that we see Loder's understanding of faith:

[F]aith is the happy inward passion by which eternity and history are held together in the bipolar-relational unity, and by which they embrace the entire human situation. Strictly speaking, faith is not bound to either a historical or and eternal object, but to their relationality in Jesus Christ; this is the objective aspect of faith, but the believer is first encountered by it, and it redefines the believer in both his subjective and his objective nature."¹⁶⁶

When the Christian is given a knowledge of God then she participates kinetically. That "kinetic key," Loder maintains, "is the passionate leap of faith which embraces the ugly ditch, the abyss, the 70,000 fathoms, and makes it a part of what is known. This is because it was first embraced in all its ugliness, as the wretchedness of history threw its full weight against the nature of Jesus Christ and found itself not only unable to crush him, but taken in and transformed into part of *God's* comprehension of all things."¹⁶⁷

Theologically speaking, reality is constituted by the Holy Spirit who grants us the power of that originating experience when we encounter the Risen Christ. The reality of the Christian is not rooted in historical scrutiny (it does play an important role, although not an ultimately defining one), but is given through an encounter with the person Jesus Christ. Reality historically constructed cannot supersede one that is constituted by Christ - the One who not only entered into the temporal flow of time-space and dwelt among us, but who continues to shape our present historical experience and dwells with us through his Spirit. The Holy Spirit faces the void and offers a wider framework that goes beyond the competencies of the ego, thus establishing a four-dimensional reality as defined by the redemptive presence and work of Jesus Christ. Included in this new reality are new frameworks that allows us to speak of a *grammar of presence*, where our understandings of historical existence may be grounded

as they relate to the Christian faith," Michalson suggests. "The right topic, by contrast, is historical revelation." And the reason he believes the topic is wrong is "because it reflects the concerns of the secular, academic sensibility." Consequently, the right topic is right "because it is what animates and sustains the worshipping community. (p. ix)"

¹⁶⁵TKM, p. 136.

¹⁶⁶TKM, p. 136.

¹⁶⁷TKM, p. 136.

pneumatologically in seeing the Holy Spirit as making the apparently absent Christ present to the modern day believer. The Christian life must be viewed not as a place that bespeaks the absence of Christ but the present presence of the Living Christ. Thus, historical existence is constituted by the mediating presence of the Risen Christ. Put another way, the Holy Spirit is the creator of history and frees us from myopic views of reality limited by the gaps in human knowledge, extending a knowledge of reality that comes from beyond us. Because the experience flows from the Person-to-person encounter with Christ and because it puts one *in* the world in a new way, it thus *frees* us to become truly historical. What I mean by this is that the Spirit puts us *into* the flow of time-space - that is, entrenched in an authentic historical reality as defined by Christ. The reality established by the Holy Spirit will thus be patterned after the life of Christ.

VII. Conclusion

Loder's relational phenomenological pneumatology reaffirms and strengthens the early church's experience of the Holy Spirit as a relational, personal, mediating presence. This means that the transforming work of the Holy Spirit cannot be bound to the historical past, but seen as a present-day potentiality. Neither can the work of the Spirit be "trapped" or limited to a particular moment in time. The "grammar of transformation," Loder contends, "is ahistorical. . . ." But this does not deny in any way that experiences of transformation are inherently historical, indeed "its generative capacity produces a great variety of expressions which are diachronic or historical in nature, ranging from personal history to the broader expressions of social and cultural transformation."¹⁶⁸ This is because the pattern of transformation is Christomorphic, following the pattern of Jesus' life.

We are given a fuller understanding of Loder's view of historical existence in his discussion of the "Christ event." The use of the word "event" might be misleading in that he is not referring to a one time happening, relegated to the past.¹⁶⁹ The "Christ event" for Loder refers to the *unique and particular* "way in which God himself appeared in history through the understanding of the early church." The "Christ event" is the five-step pattern of convictional experiences witnessed in Jesus' life and relived in the life of the believer who relates to him in the Spirit. Loder puts it this way:

[Christ] does not appear as a merely momentary or episodic vision of light, nor does he take over political leadership and construct a utopian social system. He appears to the early church as one who by his own initiative enters into all "worlds" (incarnation): by

¹⁶⁸James E. Loder, "Transformation in Christian Education," p. 14.

¹⁶⁹Here we can see Loder expanding a conventional understanding of the historical. Compare Heinrich Rickert's concept of event or "the historical" as that which is *individual* (in the sense of that which is qualitatively once-occurrent) or singular. *Limits of Concept Formation in Natural Sciences*, Abridged, Translated and Edited by Guy Oakes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 78. "The historical in its most comprehensive sense' coincides with 'the unique, invariably individual, and empirically real event itself' (p. 79)"

the proclamation of his World, he exposes the deepest possible conflict (sin) and then takes it into himself (crucifixion). In an interlude, he enters into the condemned and buried past of world history (the descent into hell) with the intention to draw all things together beneath the earth, on the earth, and above the earth. Then he emerges as the bearer of a radically new being, or new being breaks in on the earth through him (resurrection): The inherent continuity of God's action in Jesus Christ is exultantly affirmed (glorification), and it corresponds with public life in history to the great gain of all who can "see" that continuity (Pentecostal creation of the church).¹⁷⁰

When the logic of transformation in Christ confronts the human spirit then historical existence itself will reflect this pattern, so that when Loder speaks of four-dimensionality he is really speaking about a relational view of historical reality as mediated by the Spiritual Presence of Christ.

Four-dimensionality can be understood as a *field of encounter* - a *relational field* of encounter created by the Holy Spirit who is continually at work in the redemption of people through the power of Christ. For the person in Christ historical existence means participating in the perichoretic interpersonal relationality of the Trinity, and as such is continually becoming a field of *interpersonal encounters*: Holy Spirit to human spirit, and human spirit to human spirit. History is becoming a field of redeemed space-time eschatologically mediated by Christ who shows us the meaning of our lives and allows us to live freely in space-time beyond the fearful hold of the void. It is a life marked by a continued sense of openness of what is yet to be revealed in the Spirit, holding to a fluid view of reality that is relentlessly open to new ways of perceiving the world. The same old world is at the same time becoming the new world of Christ, the New Creation that the Spirit of Christ offers. The human knower exists, lives, moves, even *plays* within the field that is created by the Holy Spirit's transformation of reality into the Reality, the New Creation of Jesus Christ. When a person's Reality has been so constituted by the Spirit, one's grasp of and relationship with the past is no longer definitive, neither is one's grasp or experience of the present, because even the past and with it one's present must be open to the Spirit's reconfiguration of the facts of existence leading us into the truth about our lives. The place of encounter with the Risen Christ is always in the present because he is not bound by space-time, but he is not limited to the present either because he is present equably to all people in space-time. One's encounter with Christ as the constant thus relativizes all time-space: past, present, and future. Indeed, contemporary physics is thus allowing theologians to articulate what Christians have known from experience all along, that the experience of Christ defines the nature of temporality and not the other way around.¹⁷¹

Theologically, space and time are all relative to the presence of the light of Christ who is not bound to either. Well before Loder formally addressed these issues in *The Knight's Move*, he took up

¹⁷⁰TTM2, p. 148.

¹⁷¹Jeremy S. Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 147.

the question of historicity and temporality in a lecture given at the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City in 1969. He offers a succinct vision of how a Christian experiences space-time:

It seems to me that in Jesus' physical odyssey on earth we have the perfect paradigm for space and time thrown into radical perspective. Do you realize what he did to the Judaic view of space? He revealed the timeless, unlimitable faceless Yahweh within the limits of a man's height, starting in the even more diminished space of a womb. He expanded into the unlimited life-space of God, claiming that he was at one with the Father. This claim puts into perspective his apparent capacity to expand or extend himself almost without limit into the lived-space of other people. You will remember this is what he did when he called Nathaniel sitting under a tree far away in terms of objective space, but Jesus was apparently no further away than Nathaniel's own heart because he knew that he was an "Israelite without guile." When the right time came, "his time" he called it, he shrank to the dimension of a dead body, and then he completely disappeared, but only to re-appear in a fashion which permitted him to occupy the lived-space of others with or without objective space . . . Then, again at the right time, he disappeared by going "up." And we say that was it: the beginning and the end revealed in one abbreviated lifetime.¹⁷²

The Christian life is grounded in the pneumatological mediation of Christ which is not limited to the past, but remains a present reality. "Whatever you may want to say exegetically, it is perfectly evident that Jesus paradigmatically radicalized the spatio-temporal world of his followers. The Christ life-space is not strictly bound by objective or practical space; it can take it or leave it. The Christian does not have the 'correct time' perhaps, but he knows what time it is in the lives of men."¹⁷³

When we think of history as made up of particular events located in specific points in time - *this happened and then that, this caused that to happen* - we are still stuck in a classical metaphysic, holding to a mechanistic understanding of time-space.¹⁷⁴ With this metaphysic, an event occurs in a particular time and then it is stuck there. Loder is unbending in his desire that we view reality in a new way. Kierkegaard is his guide:

[W]e must dispel our tendency to think of time in terms of clocks. Clocks are useful, but they are an inadequate measure of the richness of time. We must even attempt to get behind our tendency to think of time in terms of past, present, and future, since these categories are also a kind of cultural fiction. This effort to penetrate behind common sense views of time is not a scientific ploy; it is Kierkegaard's effort to grasp the fundamental phenomenon behind our experience of time in a way that is simultaneously experientially concrete and also descriptive of how we construct our lives as temporal

¹⁷²James E. Loder, "Adults in Crisis," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, 63 (1970): 37-38. This was the John Sutherland Bonnell Lectureship in Pastoral Psychology established by the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church to honor the ministry and scholarship of Dr. Bonnell. Bonnell was one of Loder's teachers at Princeton.

¹⁷³Loder, p. 38.

¹⁷⁴The late physicist, Richard Feynman (1918-1988) states, ". . . in all laws of physics that we have found so far there does not seem to be any distinction between past and future." Cited in M. M. Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, Translated and Notes by Vadim Liapunov, Edited by Vadim Liapunov and Michael Holquist (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1993), p. ix.

beings. His aim is not to make an abstract study of time, but to enable us, his readers, to enter fully into the temporal, the historical, the existential, and so to participate with our humanity in the full nature of Christ.¹⁷⁵

In many ways, this is also Loder's intent, that we "enter fully into the temporal, the historical, the existential, and so to participate with our humanity in the full nature of Christ." Here we also find a clear identification of Loder's aim to speak of the "how" of the Christian life. For all the intellectual and scholarly sophistication of his work, his goal is really quite simple - yet possessing enormous implications for the life of the church.

At the end of the second edition of *The Transforming Moment*, Loder added an Epilogue. Only eight pages long, it deserves to be seen as a classic of devotional writing. In the last paragraph, he explains his reason for writing the book was not merely "reconceptualization but renewal of life in the Spirit of Christ." This is the motivating factor of everything he wrote. "Perhaps the mutual enhancement of mind and Spirit will yield up new ways of conceiving the life of God in our midst, so that the communion of saints may again - as at its Pentecostal inception - be ultimately defined by no other reality than the Spiritual Presence of God in Jesus Christ at work to restore an anguished creation to its Creator."¹⁷⁶ It is to a consideration of Loder's work, its vision of personal renewal, and its capacity to reform the church and the world that we now turn.

¹⁷⁵TKM, p. 137.

¹⁷⁶TTM2, p. 219.

Chapter Four

The Christian Life in the Field of Encounter: An "Openness to the World"

"Perhaps only those who have once been partially blinded by the Truth - whether suddenly or gradually - come to the breath-taking realization that the One who sits at table and breaks bread and drinks wine with us is the One through whom and for whom all ten billion light years of creation, including our own come-lately, here-and-now existence, have their being. To sit at table with Him is more wonderful and terrible than a blinding light since it allows us no fictional existence in which to shroud ourselves, no place to hide from the relentlessly gracious claim that our very existence, fractured and fictionalized as it is, is of infinite worth, potentially a bearer of the very Truth which we fear could so easily crush us under the weight of its glory."

James E. Loder
From the "Epilogue"
The Transforming Moment

In the preceding chapters I have introduced and examined Loder's convictional theology, what I have characterized as a relational phenomenological pneumatology. The source of my interest in Loder's work and the premise of this thesis are both grounded in the belief that his theology contains rich and principally unrecognized resources for providing a new framework for the Christian life. A secondary concern of this thesis is that his convictional theology also has enormous potential for revitalizing an ailing church, especially in Europe and North America. The order is important. I am not suggesting that his theology can be evaluated according to its ability to serve the church (although, as we will see this has been one of the major critiques of his work). Functionality and relevancy to enable the continuance and progress of the church are not acceptable criteria for him. Loder does care about the church and its ministry, as we shall see. But what is of inestimable value to him is the greater *theological and existential* claim "that our very existence, fractured and fictionalized as it is, is of infinite worth, potentially a bearer of the very Truth which we fear could so easily crush us under the weight of its glory."¹ This is the work of the church - to preach, to teach, to enflesh this message in the lives of individuals - personally, relationally - which for him is the summary of the Gospel. His target audience, I would argue, is not only the church. In addition to the church, he has a universal, cosmological concern because all of humanity shares in the existential struggle in its alienation from God. The "Spiritual Presence of God in Jesus Christ is at work to restore an anguished creation to its Creator."² When this relation is established by Christ - and every time it is reestablished - "a relation to the Divine Presence is implicitly openness to the world."³ Thus Loder's vision of the Christian life can be summed up with these words of the Apostle Paul, "God was in Christ reconciling the world (*cosmos*) to himself.

¹TTM2, pp. 211-212.

²TTM2, p. 219.

³TKM, p. 285.

(2 Corinthians 5: 17)" This chapter will further articulate Loder's image of the redeemed life and its implication for the mission of the church.

I. Convictional Experiences and the Christomorphic Pattern of the Holy Spirit

As we have seen, "Convictional experiences are revelatory of the self, world, nothingness and God." Because these experiences are initiated, guided, and completed by the Holy Spirit mediating the truth, "they do not occlude vision but widen and deepen it. Thus, the convicting experience that is of Christ will open up the self to itself, put one deeper into the world, and expose even as it reveals God's nature."⁴ Conviction yields a reorientation which occurs when the Holy Spirit encounters the human spirit, what Loder has described as an *analogia spiritus*, a framework that is not meant to be a metaphysical statement as much as an epistemological one. It is a patterned process in which God orders our understanding of reality as mediated by Christ. Loder understands Paul declaring "the radical transformation of all human horizons of reality," through which humanity is raised "into its image status so that human spirit, by the power of the Holy Spirit, may become true to its potentially Christomorphic nature."⁵ Loder is also drawing upon an idea frequently used by John Calvin (1509-1964), who understood Jesus Christ as the sole mediator of truth. It is Christ, through the Holy Spirit, who mediates the world.⁶ Without the mediation of the Spirit one is constantly at risk of having one's reality mediated two- or three-dimensionally by other ideas or persons. Conviction by the Holy Spirit *continues* the work of Jesus Christ. As a present-day work, the experience of the Spirit is an extension of Christ's ministry whose presence, as John McIntyre aptly put it, bestows the "whole power of God, completing the work of the Son as the Son had perfected the work of creation."⁷

Therefore, Loder wants to affirm a pneumatic dynamism. By this, I mean that he wants us to apprehend and *anticipate* the movement of the Spirit as a present reality subjectively experienced.⁸ Conviction in the Holy Spirit is kinetic, yielding an experience of flowing with the pulse and rhythm of God's movement in time-space. As such, the Spirit is infinitely swift, blowing where he will (John 3:8).

⁴*TTM2*, p. 61.

⁵*TKM*, pp. 4, 49-50.

⁶John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559), II. vi, Edited by John T. McNeill. Translated and Indexed by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960).

⁷John McIntyre, *The Shape of Pneumatology: Studies in the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), p. 671.

⁸As we move to a description of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian, I will be referring to the Holy Spirit with the pronoun, He (capitalized). The word "spirit" is feminine in Hebrew, neuter in Greek, and masculine in Latin. "He" or "she" might be problematic, but "it" is absolutely incorrect. The Personhood of the Spirit will be upheld.

The Spirit cannot be managed, controlled, or tamed. The action of the Spirit cannot be regulated by the human spirit, as if to direct the Spirit's power for its own purposes. In this way experiences of the Spirit cannot be socialized. The Spirit always maintains "marginal control." Remarkably, the Spirit never trounces the human spirit, but moves with extraordinary respect for the "otherness" of human life.

Yet, even with this respect Loder sees the Holy Spirit as wild, not averse to conflict and even the "sword" (Hebrews 4: 12-13) before bestowing peace and comfort. We must remember that the experience of Pentecost was radical as it was revolutionary, offering us images of the Spirit as fire and wind - violent wind.⁹ Some of this vigor is captured by the way the French refer to the *L'esprit audace*: the audacity of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is audacious: daring, never contained, recklessly bold, intrepidly daring, adventurous. The adoption of the wild goose as an image of the Holy Spirit in contemporary Celtic Christian expressions is a wonderful example of this dimension of the Christian life, given by the Spirit.¹⁰ Life in the Spirit is like being on a wild goose chase. One cannot control the Holy Spirit. He always gets beyond our grips, but we chase after him. As we chase we are led forward into wild, playful, sportive, risky, even disorderly experiences of grace. This wild experience in the Spirit can even be chaotic, but it is not capricious or destructive.¹¹ Loder would share Walter Kasper's description of what happens when life is imposed by the Holy Spirit. "Everywhere that life breaks forth and comes into being, everywhere that new life as it were seethes and bubbles, and even, in the form of hope, everywhere that life is violently devastated, throttled, gagged and slain - wherever true life exists,

⁹Cf. Maurice Merleau-Ponty's essay "Faith and Good Faith," *Sense and Nonsense*, trans. Hubert L. and Patricia Allen Dreyfuss (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964): "The meaning of Pentecost is that the religion of both Father and the Son are to be fulfilled in the religion of the Spirit, that God is no longer in Heaven but in human society and communicating, wherever men come together in His name. Christ's stay on earth was only the beginning of his presence, which is continued by the church. (p. 177)" Loder would prefer to say Christ's presence is continued by the Spirit who *forms* the church.

¹⁰As we have seen, Ian Bradley notes that no reference to this image can be found among the early Celtic Christians and seems to have been "created" by George Macleod (1895-1991). Nevertheless, it remains a powerful image for the contemporary church. Ron Ferguson, *Chasing the Wild Goose: The Iona Community* (London: Collins, 1988); Michael Mitton, *Restoring the Woven Cord: Strands of Celtic Christianity for the Church Today*, foreword by Simon Barrington-Ward (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1995), pp. 157-167.

¹¹Michael Mitton writes that, "The Holy Spirit is not a tame bird, kept in a clean cage, to be released for short bursts of charismatic meetings. . . . The Holy Spirit makes his habitation in some of the wildest and darkest places this world has to offer. . . . The Holy Spirit is wonderfully free, able to go to the dark places of our own lives, for healing to the dark unvisited places of our churches, and to the dark and demon-infested places of our society." Cited in Ray Simpson *Exploring Celtic Spirituality: Historic Roots for Our Future* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995), p. 123.

there the Spirit of God is at work."¹²

For Loder, the chaos and even wildness of God experienced in conviction must be seen within the wider purpose or *telos* of conviction: that we experience the *freedom* and *love* of God in Christ.¹³ "Convictional knowing is primarily a free and gracious act of love."¹⁴ Paul describes the Spirit at work in our lives as a call to freedom (Galatians 5: 13): "For freedom Christ has set us free (Galatians 5:1). Paul also lists the first fruits of the Spirit as love (Galatians 5:22). In John 14, the Spirit and love and truth "keep intertwining," as William Placher put it "with the memory hovering over them of that earlier word that the truth will make us free (John 8:32)."¹⁵ Whenever the "Spirit manifests God's love in freedom," Placher continues, "and when the Spirit has sealed God's work in us, then we ourselves live in love and freedom."¹⁶ Placher's description of the Spirit nicely sums up Loder's understanding of the Christian life. What Loder adds is his understanding of *how* the Spirit does this, how we move to a greater capacity for freedom and the ability to *give* and to *receive* love. In this attempt he by no means wishes to "diminish the freedom of Christ's Spirit," instead Loder wants us to be conscious of what the Spirit is trying to do *in* us and *for* us. His theology seeks to offer guidelines to help others identify the work of the Spirit in their lives, thereby intentionally participating in and with the Spirit's work of "humanizing humanity according to the nature of Christ."¹⁷ Loder's work can be seen as an answer to these questions: What is the style of the Holy Spirit? What is the Spirit trying to do? What is the Spirit trying to realize within us? How is the Spirit continuing the work of Christ within us, for us?

Loder's objective is inherently pastoral, to help people see what the Spirit of Christ is already doing and wants to do in their lives, thereby strengthening their identity in God. If the Spirit is truly the Life Giver, then as an extension of the life-giving presence of the Resurrected Christ who conquered death the Spirit is involved in the gracious work of bringing people to life and thereby "renewing the face of creation. (Psalm 104:30)" The Spiritual Presence of Christ brings people to life. But what does it take to bring a person to life, especially one who is dead (either biologically or existentially)? As an extension of Christ's life and work, the Spirit's pattern is Christomorphic in the sense that it reenacts the

¹²Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, trans. Matthew O'Connell (New York: Crossroad, 1984), p. 202 cited in William C. Placher, *Narratives of a Vulnerable God: Christ, Theology, and Scripture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), p. 64.

¹³Cf. Placher's observation that "the Spirit bears a special relation to freedom and love (p. 64)."

¹⁴*TTM2*, p. 179. We will take up both of these themes more fully later in the chapter.

¹⁵Placher, p. 64.

¹⁶Placher, p. 64.

¹⁷*TTM2*, p. 184.

Paschal mystery within an individual's life. There can be no resurrection without facing the void and negating the forces of negation which threaten life itself. There is no life without first entering and confronting death and this is something the ego can never do on its own. As a result, Loder sees the Christian life as a movement "from negation to love."¹⁸

In Loder's theology, Christ's crucifixion was not an episodic, one-time event that triumphed over death in a generic sense, death in the abstract. In Christ's confrontation with death one comes to know the way of Christ individually confronts the forces of death in every individual. The Spirit brings life to the human spirit by revealing the void at the center of one's existence - the very aspect of life that the ego struggles with all its might to deny. Too often, the church associates the Holy Spirit primarily as a docile creature. For centuries the church has praised God with the singing of the *Te Deum* in which the "Holy Ghost" is designated "the Comforter." Loder would have us believe that the Holy Spirit is also the Provoker and Conflictor. Or more correctly, we come to see the Holy Spirit as Comforter only after we realize that the true state of our lives, only after we realize we are in need of deep healing and assurance. The goal of the Spirit is freedom, but sometimes freedom and liberation are painful:

If this is the case, then from Loder's perspective of the Christian experience we need to pay close to attention to moments of pain, anguish, and existential crisis. Instead of seeing these moments as isolation or alienation from God they could be the result of the liberating Spirit of God trying to bring one to life through the conflict. As we saw in the first chapter, Loder's transformational calls us to pay close attention to the cracks, ruptures, and breaks in human knowing because they contain the means through which a deeper intelligibility can be discerned, and thereby are potentially more significant in the way they encourage new creative expressions in all forms of knowledge and lead to experiences of profound conviction. A person is most fully alive and authentically oneself when thrown into moments of heightened being and tension, when the dichotomies are most pronounced. That is the moment when education can be most fruitful and where the Christian faith can be "learned," or more correctly, experienced. This means that "no community of believers should tolerate the assumption that 'pattern maintenance' is their *raison d'être*. The Christian solutions a man achieves for the crucial struggles of his personal life need to be repeatedly called into question."¹⁹ The church plays a crucial role here of either cutting its people off from conflict altogether or being comfortable with the level of existential confusion and doubt necessary for Christian faith and practice. The task of the Spirit as educator is continually to crack open the false resolutions of the human spirit and allow the conflict to push one to deeper levels of intelligibility. The Christian life, echoing Kierkegaard, consists of crisis and conflict, and that from crisis to crisis a man's relationship with God must grow.

¹⁸TTM2, pp. 157- 181.

¹⁹Loder, "Conflict Resolution in Christian Education," p. 34.

To exist in this state of heightened tension is what Loder calls "intensification." Intensification is the place where new knowledge and growth find their origins. It is a place of considerable creativity. From the Latin, *tenere* (literally, "to hold") and *intendere* (literally, "to stretch, to intend"), intensification means "to hold in tensive unity." As Loder explains, "intensification means to draw up the optimal tension between two poles, as in the tightening of a violin string between the pegs and the string holder in order to produce maximal tonal beauty."²⁰ He continues:

When the constructive capacity of the human spirit engages a given conflict with intensification, it reaches in a straight line from the depths of human subjectivity to the outer reaches of the context in question. From that subjective polarity through the person to the outer pole of the conflict in question, intensification draws forth a clear and resonant resolution, a hitherto hidden form of intelligibility that will likely define the conflict while resolving it.²¹

Uncomfortable with this state, the ego will seek to avoid it by two-dimensionally resolving the conflict and running from the tension. Hidden forms of intelligibility, such as the knowledge of God, however are given when one is able to indwell or sustain the conflict - to live in the pain, to choose for the neurosis, to face the void. Conviction is a stretching and opening up of reality; as it stretches and pulls it also provokes the human spirit to rise to higher forms of knowing, to cognitively make space for what it revealed in the knowing event, the new Reality, the New Creation (2 Corinthians 5: 17). The Presence of the Holy in an individual's life inevitably *increases* existential tension, that is it heightens the tension and distinction between death and life, between time and eternity, sin and grace, the human spirit and the Holy Spirit. At the same time the Spirit as mediating the Presence of Christ is the embodiment of intensification - the "tensive unity" of human and divinity which is the incarnation.²²

²⁰TKM, p. 267.

²¹TKM, p. 267.

²²Whether at the cross-sectional extremities of human pain and joy, or at the longitudinal extremities of the human life space from birth to death, the transforming Spirit of Christ precedes and seeks to refashion us according to His nature - indeed, according to Him whose outstretched arms are simultaneously crucifixion and liberation. The loving embraces which crucifies us, and the crucifixion which frees us, disclose a grandeur of design and an ultimate contingency far greater than the universe itself embodies because they include us and the answer to our relentless question, *Why?*" TTM2, p. 218. Cf. the "tensive unity" in the Medieval use of the mandorla (Latin for "almond"), the almond-shaped segment that is made when two circles partly overlap, representing the reconciliation of opposites (such as heaven and earth, or divinity and humanity), creating a profound symbol of healing, energy, and power. Images of Christ and the Virgin Mary are often portrayed within the framework of the mandorla, usually at the entrance to cathedrals. A mandorla represents "two orders of reality" that have been superimposed. The Jungian Christian analyst, Robert A. Johnson writes, "Whenever you have a clash of opposites in your being and neither will give way to the other (the bush will not be consumed and the fire will not stop), you can be certain that God is present. We dislike this experience intensely and avoid it at any cost; but if we can endure it, the conflict-without-resolution is a direct experience of God." *Owning Your Own Shadow: Understanding the Dark Side of the Psyche* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), p. 98-107.

When scripture talks about being "searched by the Spirit" it can be understood as a process of intensification. So that when the church prays, "Veni, Creator Spiritus," we need to be mindful of what is involved in such a request. When we ask for the Creator Spirit to be present in our lives, we are really asking that the very Spirit who searches the inner, most intimate depths of God's Being reveal to our human spirits the deepest mysteries and hidden wisdom of God. If the purpose of God's Spirit is to free us, and if we really want to be free (which is not always the case, even though we pray for it), then we must be open to what such a liberation will look like. We are literally playing with fire. "We only live, only suspire/ Consumed by either fire or fire."²³ To be searched by the Spirit is a powerful and awesome experience. Because the Spirit cannot be controlled or managed, there is no way to anticipate what the outcome might be. We can only give ourselves over to its liberating work. Loder would often say, "Yield to the Spirit." Or as Basil the Great (c.330-379) put it, we are called to live "with the co-operation of the Spirit."²⁴

There is no room for fear. This is because the search by this Spirit, reflecting the very depths of God, is by a Spirit who searches the very depths of the human spirit so in the end we might know the love of God. Indeed, as many Christians will attest, often in the moment of strife we appear blind to God's presence. Only in retrospect can we see that the Spirit was indeed at work in our lives during periods of greatest chaos. It really should not be surprising that the Spirit can be known in chaos, because the Spirit who searches the human spirit has also searched the depths of God, a God who disclosed the depths of His love through Christ in the chaos of the cross.

Viewed from atop the cross, our lives are seen in a whole new light. To be searched by the Spirit of God means to witness the work of God who is vulnerable and open, a God who decides to be strong in weakness, a God who desires to create and re-create us, making sinners into saints and making all things new. God reveals His character and power through the scandal and pain of the cross. To be searched by the Spirit means that God breaks in and reveals the chaos of our lives, who opens us up to the fresh breath of the Spirit in order to be healed and brought to life. The Spirit disrupts and disturbs, turns our worlds upside down and inside out, in order to shake the foundations of our lives with fear and trembling until we wake up and experience the depth of God's love. All of this occurs deeper than the defensive structures of the ego. The Spirit plumbs to the very core of our being, to our heart of hearts, and one by one, lays bare the things that distort our lives and need to be healed, all the things that obstruct our relationship with God and thus hinder the experience of true life. The one whose hands were pierced and stretched out is the same one who holds us in the hollow of his hand with a love that will

²³T. S. Eliot, "Four Quartets," *The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909-1950* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1971), p. 147.

²⁴Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit* XVI.38 cited in Colin Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), p. 37.

never let us go.²⁵ It is Christ's Spirit who brings us to his cross, which becomes our cross. Just as Christ "descended into hell," to "make captivity captive, (Ephesians 4: 8)" so too the Spirit compels us to descend into the "hell" of our lives and not run from the presence of the void. Just as the Spirit raised Christ up, so the Spirit will raise us up, bring us to an empty tomb, and extend the promise of new life. The Paschal mystery demonstrates that God will do whatever it takes to reveal this love to us. There is no extent to which God will not go to show us just how much we are loved by him.

II. Discerning the Christomorphic Pattern

Convictional theology places considerable value upon religious experience. Loder is a realist, as we have seen. He firmly believes that the Spirit of Christ is at work in the world and is experienced as a present reality. He is compelled to say this because of his own moments of conviction. Loder wants others to be as open to what the Spirit is doing in their lives in concrete, tangible ways. In order to do this, one needs to be familiar with the style of the Spirit. Yet, it is this aspect of this thought, I would argue, which has hindered its reception. Experiential theology is problematic and looked down upon within the Reformed tradition. Saying this, Loder did not want to say that every experience is the baseline or foundation of religious truth. Individual experience cannot be pressed into universals. For example, "the black experience," the "Hispanic experience," or the "women's experience" cannot be universally applied to everyone.²⁶ In some ways, Loder could be guilty of this, making his convictional experiences into a universally applicable framework. One could mistakenly view his theology as an example of George A. Lindbeck's "experiential-expressive model" of religion. What we find is more there just a turn to or obsession with the subjective.²⁷ But neither would Loder feel comfortable within Lindbeck's "cultural-linguistic model," primarily because it suggests a human construct that serves a functional purpose within society. Given Loder's critique of socialization, Lindbeck's model does not do justice to an experience which finds its origins beyond the confines of the self. There is a difference between human experience as mediated by the ego and a convictional one that confers an experience and knowledge beyond the defensive structures of the ego. Loder argues that:

Self-involvement implies self-knowledge, but . . . knowing ourselves is no easy task

²⁵As expressed in George Matheson's (1842-1906) well-known hymn, "O Love that wilt not let me go." See Ian Campbell Bradely, *O Love that wilt not let me go: Meditations, Prayers and Poems by George Matheson* (London: Found Paperbacks, 1990).

²⁶James E. Loder, "Normativity and Context in Practical Theology: 'The Interdisciplinary Issue,'" in Friedrich Schweitzer and Johannes A. Van der Van, Editors, *Practical Theology: International Perspectives* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), pp. 363-364.

²⁷George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), pp. 30ff. Religious experience is contingent upon a specific cultural-linguistic parameters, however the experience cannot be reductionistically appropriated as such.

primarily because we do not really want to know ourselves. Tacitly, we suspect that we will find human nature too devastatingly empty in itself and at the same time - perhaps in the same breath - too awesomely close to God. This unyielding truth about us beyond what we would ordinarily choose to know is nevertheless the key to our knowledge of everything else. That is, we know that sooner or later the boundaries of our best-conceived worlds, as with the best-lived lives, must yield to destruction, so we challenge those boundaries even where they seem secure, buffers against apparent chaos. Implicitly, we seem to know that the only order we can ultimately count on must exceed the boundaries of the known universe - the infinitesimally small as well as the infinitely great - and we know that knowing itself must yield to a higher intelligibility because knowing cannot be its own reason for being. Thus, it is from beyond such boundaries that insight - sometimes of revolutionary proportions - *comes upon us*.²⁸

Such a view does not deny the importance of human experience, but it is not definitive until it is taken up or incorporated into the presence of Christ. Self-knowledge is delusion unless it is mediated by the Spirit of Christ.²⁹

How does one guard against delusion and self-deception? How does one know if a religious experience is conviction (that is grounded in Christ) or simply "subjective intoxication."³⁰ To help us in this determination, Loder offers five theological and five psychological guidelines which are interrelated. While they serve as a good summary of Loder's theology, especially how he uses theological and psychological insights, they also are of inestimable value to the ordinary Christian suffering through convictional experiences. Clergy and spiritual directors would also do well to be led by these tendencies. These are not attempts to establish "spiritual laws," nor provide counseling techniques, but a way to discern the *style* of the Spirit.

1. Theologically, "*Convictional experiences are to be seen as initiated by Christ, not by any human effort, spirits, or departed souls.*"³¹ The source of the experience is not found in the self. One cannot lift oneself into a spiritual realm in order to make "contact" or in the attempt to be more

²⁸TTM2, pp. 216-217. Italics in the text.

²⁹In this regard Loder would be in agreement with Reinhard Hütter's argument that theological claims are rooted in pathos, which "originally referred to any kind of suffering in the sense of undergoing or incurring as opposed to acting or doing, . . ." He sees "pathos characterizing the core of Christian experience," whereby the "center of pathic existence is. . . *audire*, the receptivity of faith." *Audire* is a surrendering "*to God's presence such that this presence defines or determines us and in so doing inevitably also defines or determines our theological discourse.*" As a result, we must say "*not only does God's action 'determine' human beings qualitatively (as regards accidens), it also creates them as both creature and new creation. This human pathos (and that of the theologian) corresponds to God's own poesis, the poesis of the Holy Spirit to which all theology is subjected and which is presented to theology in a quite specific way.*" *Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice*, trans., Doug Stott (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), p. 31. Italics in the text.

³⁰TTM2, p. 185.

³¹TTM2, p. 185. Italics in the text. Loder provides clinical case studies from his counseling experiences to authenticate each guideline. They will not preoccupy us here.

"spiritual." Simply put, when human existential needs are manipulated with religious or spiritual overtones they do not offer what the human spirit is searching for, namely freedom and love. The human spirit might have a sense of "spiritual power over oneself, others, and all 'worlds,'" but this power is a destructive overcompensation of the ego. "What does not begin with Christ's initiative, either directly or by implication, cannot end in him."³²

2. *"Transforming experiences initiated by Christ are characterized by a resulting sacrificial love in the one transformed."*³³ This, more than any other "result" marks an experience as being "of Christ." Loder believes that "deeper than consciousness, is the longing to give love and a willingness to give it sacrificially." By sacrifice he does not mean anything having to do with blood, death or martyrdom; "it has to do with 'making sacred.'"³⁴ When Christ enters into human brokenness and conflict with the power of resurrection this is an act of "making sacred." Similarly, when the power of Christ is at work in an individual one is then free to love and to be loved. One is freed to enter into the brokenness and conflicted life of another and love empathically. The goal of conviction is love because the human spirit restricted by the ego is incapable of giving this kind of love.³⁵

3. *"Consistent with the continuity of Christ's initiative, transforming moments, subjectively sensed to be from Christ, will go in search of objective expressions about Christ."*³⁶ It is within this context that we see Loder's understanding of other aspects of what is traditionally considered constitutive of the Christian life. As a result, "scripture, sacrament, worship, and theological writings take on fresh life and become extremely vital in establishing the meaning of transforming moments."³⁷ We saw this in Loder's personal accounts of conviction. He turned to Brunner's *The Scandal of Christianity* and read it from within the intuitive framework of the text. Scripture is read from the "inside" because one "knows" the reality to which it points. The sacraments deepen and define the far-reaching implications of transformation. To say the *Sursum corda* in the Eucharist is to be literally lifted up into the company

³²TTM2, p. 187.

³³TTM2, p. 187.

³⁴TTM2, p. 177.

³⁵TTM2, p. 175. "There are two fundamental enemies to giving love. The first is the fear that acceptance become absorption, and the second is the fear of rejection, abandonment, and, in effect dying." This struggle begins to emerge in the early months of life through the relationship between a child and its mother. "The only defense one has against absorption is the distancing powers of the autonomous ego, but the ego is so constructed that it prevents face-to-face intimacy. Therefore it puts the personality in a double-bind: without the defensive ego, absorption follows; with the defensive ego, no real intimacy is possible (p. 175)."

³⁶TTM2, p. 190.

³⁷TTM2, p. 190.

of heaven. It is not simply a function to "technique" remembrance. . . ." The Eucharist "cannot be a response that imitates his presence, not one which flees from it; his real presence must make it possible for us to be really present for each other."³⁸

4. "*Convictional experiences are to be seen preeminently as a breakthrough from the future.*"³⁹ Here the eschatological elements of Loder's thought become evident. The past is not definitive for him. For the Christian history is never destiny. Because he refuses to think linearly about time, he can claim that moments of the Spirit "bring the past forward into a new future made possible by the transforming event."⁴⁰ Even after a moment of conviction it is possible to go back into the memory of Christ's Presence "and find that his Presence is no longer a memory but a living reality in the present, the future of time past."⁴¹ This is also why Erikson's model of human development is flawed, theologically speaking, because it does not do just to moments when the meaning of past events can be altered through the redeeming present of Christ's new future. "The convictional experience is a breakthrough from the future even as it is a transformation of the past."⁴²

Finally, 5. "*Convictional experiences call for a social context whose inner and outer structures sustain and celebrate the continuities of Christ (especially the Word and sacrament).*"⁴³ This corresponds to the last stage of convictional knowing. But it is also, perhaps, the most critical because this context has the power to either "sustain or celebrate the continuities of Christ" or it can extinguish them. One cannot sustain the conviction alone. This is why Loder's theology is not individualistic. Yet, one must not enter into a social construct uncritically. The social construct needs to be transformed. Because of this, Loder lists general characteristics of societies that foster further growth in the Spirit. There can be "*no absolute human authority*, because authority rests with the Author of the convictional experience." There must be an openness to "*complexity rather than superficiality.*" Communities that favor legalistic approaches to the Christian life and favor simplistic answers to life's mysteries hinder life in the Spirit. Due to the creative element within transforming experiences, they inherently open up

³⁸TTM2, p. 120. James E. Loder, "Dimensions of Real Presence," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, 59 (1966): 31. This is a sermon preached before the seminary community, based on 1 Corinthians 2: 1-6; 11: 23-24.

³⁹TTM2, p. 191.

⁴⁰TTM2, p. 190.

⁴¹TTM2, p. 190.

⁴²TTM2, p. 193.

⁴³TTM2, p. 193.

"new realms of being and meaning that call for richer, deeper understandings."⁴⁴ The community should nurture this experience. There should be a respect for the "*inner life* of the individual."⁴⁵ A positive value is placed on conflict within the community, because the presence of conflict has the potential of offering new visions of the Christian life. Related to this there must "*a recognition and acceptance of personal differences* as manifestations of the divine interest in particularity."⁴⁶ Lastly, the social context needs to contain "an instrumental or activist axis" built into it. There needs to be support in "doing something about one's convictional experience" in that it leads to further action on the part of the individual.

Loder's psychological guidelines reinforce the theological ones. As we move through these descriptions, the personalist, relational dynamic of his thought will be even more pronounced.

1. "*Convictional experiences are revelatory of the self, world, God, and evil.*"⁴⁷ As such, they never "occlude vision but deepen it." In this way they are insight producing in that revelation and experience are integrated. This leads to a fuller understanding or embrace of reality as it really is. They crack open well-established beliefs, opinions, perspectives, and assumptions and expose them for what they really are. As such, convictional experiences lead one deeper into truth and allow one to find the face of God even in the void. Convictional experiences do not protect us even from long-held spiritual or religious beliefs, for even religious faith and practice can be used by the ego as protection in the face of the void. There is no place for the ego to hide. From an ethical viewpoint, even aspects of one's life that might be attributed to the devil or evil need to be shattered, because these strategies prevent us from engaging in the question of evil. As a result, one can come "to see the 'good' buried in [ones] vices."

Most notably, a convictional experience "is designed to increase one's sense of self-worth without decreasing one's capacity to give love."⁴⁸ Conviction is grounded in the love of God. This is clear, but Loder also wants to affirm that what the conviction discloses is "God's appreciation for the particularity of the individual."⁴⁹ Conviction brings a heightened sense of the Holy, but it also brings with it a more pronounced sense of the self. One's individuality becomes more "real," and by extension the individuality and particularly of others also become more real. The result is that one begins to affirm

⁴⁴This discourages "cultic formulas, clichés, and trite Christian language, which foster partial truths, curtail thinking, and obviate attention to the uniqueness of the individual. (p. 194)"

⁴⁵This is to support the development of imagination in an individual, to "prevent an external imposition of authoritarian systems rigidly overemphasizing right doctrine and moral order. (p. 194)"

⁴⁶*TTM2*, p. 194.

⁴⁷*TTM2*, p. 196.

⁴⁸*TTM2*, p. 198.

⁴⁹*TTM2*, p. 198.

the self (in a healthy way) and affirms the self-worth of others. This is done through the personal intimacy of spirit to Spirit. Because of this relational model Loder is sure to point out that "knowing God only as an archetype, Idea, metaphysical process or political ideology may turn one's life around, but none of these alternatives suffices to present the personal God revealed in Christ."⁵⁰

2. *"Regardless of how sudden such experiences may seem to be, they have a personal history in the individual."*⁵¹ The experiences might come from out of nowhere, but they are rooted in the deep past of the self. They are not generic, but "person-specific." Even though they all lead to four-dimensional being, what that looks like will be particular to the individual. Loder is not saying that there is a direct correlation between one's past (either conscious or unconscious) and transformation. The insights that come can very often open up experiences long forgotten. In fact, "one frequently finds the whole record of one's memories reordered by the convicting experience, and many forgotten events, persons, and meanings are illuminated as surprisingly significant." What makes these experiences particular is the way they open up a future for the individual, without denying the experiences of the past.⁵²

3. *"Consistent with the principle that convicting experiences are revelatory of one's personal past is the proposition that the so-called normal sequence of human development may become reversible."*⁵³ Because the Spirit is not bound by time, to some degree neither is the human spirit. Conviction might require reliving an experience from early childhood or an anticipation of one's death. "Much of the health that comes from such experiences derives from this unique transcendent relationship to the ordinary course of human development." By reversibility, Loder means, first, that "the meaning of past experiences and of inevitable future experiences such as death may be automatically or subliminally altered." The second "is that one's self-consciousness is liberated to revisit the past or to anticipate the future with increasing flexibility and freedom. Thus the linear unfolding of life through a prescribed sequence becomes, in effect reversible for future development and self-understanding." God's action in effecting both is determinant.⁵⁴ Even an anticipation of death has the power to undo its hold over life. Since "death is already familiar to oneself and also to Christ, who goes through it ahead

⁵⁰ *TTM2*, p. 200.

⁵¹ *TTM2*, p. 201.

⁵² "Correlatively, convicting moments that work simply to seal off the past, making it a closed book, are likely to be repressive not only of future growth but also of all the meaning that may be in the experience for others. Reopening the past is an important latent potentiality that nearly always needs support and encouragement in one's personal appropriation of convictional experience. (p. 201)"

⁵³ *TTM2*, p. 201.

⁵⁴ *TTM2*, p. 202.

of, and with, his people," it has the power - in Christ - to be an illuminating, transforming awareness.⁵⁵

4. *"Reversibility of human development does not imply absorption of the psychological ego."*⁵⁶

As we have seen from the beginning, for Loder health is determined by one's ability to choose and to choose freely. When the ego is grounded in Christ, "freedom to choose for or against what God is doing in the world is actually enhanced, because fewer of one's choices are subject to unexamined psychological influences," such as neurotic tendencies that distort reality.⁵⁷ Instead, the ego is strengthened and free from its self-destructive, self-defensive patterns. Instead of serving itself, one is free to choose from the strength of the ego to live into the new future that God is granting in and through the moment of conviction, thereby enhancing the lives of others. Conviction involves the transformation of the ego in order to free the ego to choose life, which is why these experiences cannot be socialized or forced, managed or staged.

5. *"The transformational process facilitated by a convictional experience calls for continuity of expression."*⁵⁸ This corresponds to the last theological guideline concerning context. Convicting power is not designed to be arrested and invested in "authoritarian frames of reference."⁵⁹ Power and authority rest only in Christ. Transformation calls forth further transformation, whether within the individual or within a wider frame of reference. The human spirit longs to remain and indwell the Presence of the Convictor who continues the work of transformation, for there is never a sense of arrival. The Creator Spiritus can "initiate the process again and again in the course of one's spiritual formation."⁶⁰

At the end of the five theological guidelines, Loder describes a social context that embraces, affirms, and fosters a convictional way of knowing and being Christian. His expectations appear ideal if not utopian. Is there such a place where all of these requirements would be fulfilled? Loder is not

⁵⁵ *TTM2*, p. 205.

⁵⁶ *TTM2*, p. 205.

⁵⁷ *TTM2*, p. 205. "Neurosis in general is characterized by a symbolically distorted world in which one sees realities overlaid with incongruent meanings that must be consciously rectified or accounted for. . . . When the reality of everyday life is distorted from the moment of perception, there is no freedom of choice; all choices are inherently misconceived. Thus, under neurotic conditions, all choices are bound to repeat the past and relive the distortion endlessly. (p. 206)"

⁵⁸ *TTM2*, p. 207.

⁵⁹ *TTM2*, p. 207.

⁶⁰ *TTM2*, p. 208. "What needs to be understood is that the Spirit, who is the Teacher, intends the wholeness, freedom, and joy of the one who comes under conviction. There is nothing vacuous or uncertain about this; the initially convicting process, moving from conflict through resolution, is the same sure process by which God's intention operates in subsequent periods to generate wholeness after the pattern of Christ. (p. 208)"

trying to be idealist. Instead, what begins to emerge here is his vision of the church in his discussion of the *koinonia*. Perhaps one of the reasons Loder's theology has been charged as lacking a clear ecclesiology is because other scholars have been looking for it in the wrong place. Their expectations of what the church is supposed to be have eclipse their ability to grasp Loder's vision, one that for many is both radical and alien compared to contemporary understandings of the church.

III. The Dialectic of the *Koinonia* and the *Ekklesia*

It is in the area of Loder's ecclesiology that he has received the strongest critique. In her memorial tribute, Freda A. Gardner, former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and Loder's long-time colleague in the School of Christian Education at Princeton, noted a concern held by many who came to respect his work: the nature of the church.⁶¹ In Craig Dykstra's completely appreciative review of *The Transforming Moment* he wonders about the "the role of communities of faith in human transformation."⁶² Loder's reliance upon Kierkegaard (who is often misunderstood as an individualist), as well as his preoccupation with ego development and the individual have further reinforced this notion that what he offers is privatistic, thereby shunning the faith community.

To throw these charges at Loder is a gross misreading of his entire *oeuvre* because they fail to see the power of relationality driving his theology. They have also conflated his stress of the personal as a celebration of individualism. However, Loder believed there cannot be an authentic *I* without a *Thou*. The Thou is Christ as head of the church, not the church as a substitute for Christ (Ephesians 1:22). One time Loder said to me, "Serve Christ, Ken, not the church." This statement might seem to validate Gardner, Dykstra and others' who have this concern, of Loder somehow setting Christ against the church, setting up a false and overly simplistic dichotomy. But what Loder is stressing in this aphorism is the importance of seeing ministry - indeed, the Christian life - as one of service to the *person* Jesus Christ and through Christ as service to all *persons*. As we have seen, the center of Loder's concern is the transformation of the person which can only take place through an encounter with the Spiritual Presence of Christ, as Spirit-to-spirit. Relationality is the heuristic through which Loder understands everything. The reason why Loder is silent and in his silence highly critical of the church (correctly, I would argue) is because the community as community has failed to see itself as constituted

⁶¹Freda Gardner, "James Edwin Loder, Jr.: A Tribute," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 23 (2002): 191.

⁶²Craig Dykstra, review of *The Transforming Moment: Understanding Convictional Experiences*, by James E. Loder, *The Princeton Theological Seminary Bulletin* 3 (1982): 341. See also Dykstra's review, "Transformation in Faith and Morals," *Theology Today*, 39 (1982): 56-64. Dykstra was one of Loder's doctoral students and later his colleague at Princeton. His doctoral dissertation was "Christian Education and the Moral Life: An Evaluation of and Alternative to Kohlberg/Piaget" (1978).

by the work of the Spirit. When this occurs the institution comes to have greater value than the people. The people are "used" for the sake of the institution's work. The community as community does not have the power or the authority to give what only can be given in and through Jesus Christ. The church or community of faith cannot be a surrogate for one's relationship with Christ, because usually very often the church is little more than an extension of the collective egos of the membership or the dictatorial ego of the minister or priest. In this Loder offers a biting critique of the church. For those who are invested in the preservation of the church as an institution, what Loder offers is extremely threatening. Yet, what Loder offers here has the potential of reframing the way we view the church and offers the possibility of its revitalization.

Instead of talking about the church, Loder prefers to concentrate on the *koinonia*. In *The Transforming Moment*, *The Knight's Move*, and the *Logic of the Spirit*, Loder places considerable stock in Paul Lehmann's discussion of this word in *Ethics in a Christian Context*. Indeed, Loder sees the *koinonia* as "the overall pattern of Christ life. . . ."⁶³ Lehmann's concern is for establishing continuities with Christ and thus defines the *koinonia* as "the fellowship-creating reality of Jesus Christ."⁶⁴ The *koinonia* is a social reality, but it is unique, Loder argues, because "people enter it by grace, not by socialization patterns." This is a significant statement. The presence of Christ constitutes the social reality and has absolute authority - not the community so formed. Christians have roles and functions, "but their particularity is heightened rather than diminished by the corporate reality." Convictional experience compels one to "go in search of the *koinonia* as its context for growth, interpretation, and ethical expression."⁶⁵ Convicted persons need a context to wrestle with the implications of convictional knowing by strengthening them to live from within the transformation, to make ethical decisions based upon their ongoing encounter with Jesus Christ. It is a social context that nurtures the person in Christ; it *reinforces* the transformational paradigm and does not reduce it to something else.

As a result, the *koinonia* has corporate power which limits "institutional power to dehumanize through an imposition of role structures and status systems." It becomes clear that "the *koinonia* is not to be identified with the institutional church; neither is it to be separated from it."⁶⁶ They stand in a

⁶³*TTM2*, p. 194.

⁶⁴Paul Lehmann, *Ethics in a Christian Context* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963) cited in *TTM2*, p. 195. In his essay "The Fashioning of Power: A Christian Perspective on the Life-Style Phenomenon," contributed to Lehmann's *Festschrift*, Loder sees the *koinonia* as "a convictional operation which is fundamentally transcendent and therefore free to be solidly social." Alexander J. McKelway and E. David Willis, eds., *The Context of Contemporary Theology: Essays in Honor of Paul Lehmann* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1974), p. 201.

⁶⁵*TTM2*, p. 196.

⁶⁶*TTM2*, p. 195.

dialectic, yet it appears that the koinonia is given a kind of marginal control over the church.⁶⁷ The koinonia places demands upon the church seen as an institution, because transformational experiences disrupt and dismantle the authority the church likes to maintain as an institution. It acts as a ferment within the institution to keep it humble. In *The Knight's Move*, Loder also adopts T. F. Torrance's view of the koinonia as "the communion-creating activity of the Holy Spirit."⁶⁸ Loder stresses the distinction between the koinonia and the church and keeps them in creative tension because he sees the work of the Holy Spirit as primarily negating the patterns of socialization so prevalent in the church.

We are particularly concerned here with the ecclesial significance of koinonia. In this connection, what the "communion-creating activity of the Holy Spirit" negates is as strong and clear as what it affirms. It negates the formation of such a communion by ordinary socialization processes: determination and defense of territory, initiation rites, rites of intensification, role structures, hierarchical stratification, and a legal system are all obviated and transformed by the notion of this sort of communion. This is a community that includes but transcends such anthropological considerations precisely because each member and all together are transformed with respect to such constraints.⁶⁹

Loder is not calling for the dismantling of the institutional structure of the church, but saying that the structure cannot be definitive for the Christian life.⁷⁰ It is in need of constant reform and transformation.

⁶⁷LS, p. 194. The "institutional church is a socially constructed reality based on roles and role systems, which are the outgrowth of, not the condition for, koinonia. To be sure, these two, the koinonia and the institutional church, will always be found together and dialectically related, as the Chalcedonian understanding of Christ would dictate, with the spiritual presence of Christ exercising marginal control over the institutional forms that are created to express it. (p. 194)" No doubt, Loder's critique of the institutional church has some affinity with Kierkegaard's attack upon Christendom. See, Kierkegaard's, *Training in Christianity*. Translated with an Introduction and Notes by Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972). He might also have been informed by Hans Hofmann's views: "The Church is forever in danger of becoming an institution where individuals want to receive life cheaply through a magic misunderstanding of the liturgical and sacramental aspect of the Church. . . . Thus, the Church was understood as the place where the individual could accept either a magic device which promotes spiritual life [that is, seeing the sacrament as a *pharmakon athanasias*], or train his moral conscience and ability for happiness toward an ideal of the self as a moral hero of stoic emotional equilibrium. In opposition to this selfishly individualistic misunderstanding of the church, there was always a trend in the history of the Church to go to the other extreme, namely, to define the Church merely as a gathering of those enlightened people, who, on their own, know the meaning of religion and inspire each other to be trained toward an even more ideal life together." See "Immortality or Life," *Theology Today* 15 (1958): 241.

⁶⁸TKM, p. 305. Cf. T. F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith* (New York: HarperCollins, 1988). Loder notes that Torrance's definition might be preferable to Lehmann's "since it applies both to the koinonia of the Godhead and to the koinonia of the church. (p. 305)"

⁶⁹TKM, p. 205. "Koinonia is a transformation of the cult by the Holy Spirit such that in the worship of the triune God by the koinonia, the underlying order of the universe revealed in Jesus Christ is portrayed for the Christian participants. (p. 306)"

⁷⁰"Koinonia is thoroughly social, but not able to be socialized; persons are present to each other in ways not able to be fully grasped by functional categories because the fullness of the communion is the premise, not the outcome, of relationships in the koinonia." LS, p. 40.

Loder wants to affirm that the place where individuals experience the power of the Risen Christ is primarily through their participation in the life of the church. But experiences of the Spirit cannot be limited to the church. The Spirit is not limited to the gathered of the worshiping community. The Holy Spirit is not a possession of the church, instead the church is formed through and by the Holy Spirit. Here we see the church not as a bureaucratic institution, but as the gathering of people called out from the common life of the culture due to an experience they had "in Christ." The church was not formed as an institution to preserve the tradition of Jesus, but was primarily a meeting place established for women and men who had similar experiences of the Holy Spirit, who encountered the transforming presence of Jesus Christ and needed to come together to testify to each other of the extraordinary things God was doing in their lives. As the community listened to one another's testimony and witness they offered praise and thanksgiving for all that God had done in Christ and continued to do through him in the Spirit.⁷¹ This exchange also formed the basis of *koinonia* in the community.

This understanding of the *koinonia-ekklesia* dialectic is a refreshing, if not radical vision for the church because it serves as a corrective to some of the destructive, pervasive images currently operative. It is refreshing because an emphasis upon the *koinonia* in contradistinction to the institution puts the morass of the present-day church in sharp relief. In this light we come to see the church as institution as dysfunctional and neurotic in that it hinders the freedom of those who are taking their inner life seriously and are attempting to be faithful to the convictional process. The institution seeks to manage the action of the community, but in this way it actually clips or cuts off the community from the Spirit who seeks to constitute it as a "fellowship-creating reality of Jesus Christ." There is so much *power* in the presence of Christ available to the individual and, by extension to the church. But it is threatening to the ego and so we seek to tame it, organize it, manage it. Far too many clergy are guilty of trying to tame the Spirit in their own lives that it leads to a further repression of the Spirit in the lives of their congregants. Ministry thus becomes loyalty to an institution and not to Jesus Christ as head of the church. By stressing the *koinonia* as a parallel element throws the institution into conflict, heightens the tension between the two (intensification), thereby giving those within the institution the freedom to choose and in choosing hopefully reach for reform that will allow the church to be renewed. This is desperately needed.

⁷¹C. Jeff Woods, *Congregational Megatrends* (New York: The Alban Institute, 1996), "New Testament Christians encountered God directly. They also encountered God corporately. Whenever the church gathered for worship, the participants expect the Spirit to take the lead. The word church is derived from the New Testament Greek word *ekklesia*, which literally means a 'meeting,' without any reference to purpose or organization. When we think of 'meeting' today, we often picture two or more people encountering one another. But it seems that the New Testament word for church suggested a meeting between people and God, rather than one another. Viewing church as an opportunity to encounter God is more powerful than many of our images of church today. . . . Viewing the church as more of an organization than a place to interact with the Spirit of God misses the mark. When the people of God, gathered as the church, fail to encounter God, then they are not really the church. (p. 99)"

My denomination, the Presbyterian Church (U. S. A.), has for the last twenty years recorded significant losses in membership. In 2001, we lost close to 30,000 members and that number has been the same for the last couple of years. We are not alone. The other mainline churches (United Methodist, the United Church of Christ, the Episcopalian) have reported similar losses. These are only symptoms of something deeper, something desperately wrong with Protestantism. The church in North America and Europe is anemic. The majority of those who live beyond the walls of the church view the Christian Gospel and the institutional expressions of its seemingly archaic ideas as a relic of the past with little or no relevancy to the present generation, offering no words of hope and healing, almost denying the potential of transformation. Within the walls of the church frustration, anxiety, and anger reign supreme because the old patterns of "doing church" simply no longer work. Gone are the days of Christendom when it was assumed that to be European or American meant to be Christian of some sort. Church and culture were one. The church had a voice, offered hope, worked for the reform of society. Today is a post-Christian age and we have lost our voice and respect in the culture. We still have a functional use in that the church helps to teach and reinforce the morality of the culture. The supernatural claims of the Gospel have all been whittled down to what is reasonable (meaning functional) and therefore relevant, leaving us with little more than moral platitudes to offer the world.⁷² There is a sense that God is absent - even in the church. It is clear that the church is in serious trouble. Once a community constituted by the power of God's radical, redeeming, liberating love, now the church has become an entrenched, inherently conservative, socio-cultural institution that gathers to perform its rituals and organize strawberry festivals.⁷³ Where are the signs that the transforming presence of Christ is at work?

IV. Transformation vs. Formation

Loder's work urges the contemporary institutional church to reaffirm that the Christian experience, as both the New Testament witnesses and countless other Christians have also testified, is essentially about *transformation*. He stresses this not only because it is the Biblical model, but also to put it in sharp relief against the patterns of socialization or formation which have and continue to suck

⁷²In the United States a firm separation of church and state keeps us apart, that is until it is politically convenient to tear down the wall to rally around the flag and declare that we are "One Nation Under God." This has become all too apparent in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 11th September 2001.

⁷³Not every church is in dire straits. I am talking generally, and that is always dangerous. But I do think I give voice to the deep frustration of many clergy, church members, and non-Christians in both the United States and Scotland who are distressed by and disappointed with the present state of the church. On the other hand, the present state of the church could be seen as a positive one, in that our alienation from the culture is forcing us to be clearer about the true nature of the church apart from its identification with the culture. See Douglas John Hall, "The Future of the Church," *Sewanee Theological Review*, 36 (1993): 463-492.

the life out of the church - both as institution and koinonia. As the scriptures clearly maintain, whoever came into contact with Jesus was changed. Paul speaks for many who encountered God's love in the face of Christ when he wrote, "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, . . ." (2 Corinthians 5:17-19). The source of the transformation is the power of God's redeeming grace revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. After the resurrection, it is the Holy Spirit who mediates the presence of the Risen Christ to individuals and continues the process of this new creation revealed in the resurrection. "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:17-18)" The Spirit as the presence of Jesus, the Lord, continues the work of transformation, bringing *to life* all that was dead and reversing the forces of evil and decay that seek to bring all things to nothing. For "the Spirit gives life. (2 Corinthians 3:6)"

The life of Jesus culminating in the resurrection was and remains the primal, constitutive, life engendering experience for the Christian. On the first day of the week, with the Sabbath completed, the three women who made their way to anoint Jesus's body with spices did not go expecting an empty tomb. They went to embalm the body of Jesus and prepare it for deterioration. They did not go with hope, but with grief. They were shocked to find the stone rolled away and the body gone. Luke tells us that they were startled by angels, and terrified by their presence, and confused even more when they heard the men say, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen" (Luke 24: 1-12). They flee to tell the others and Peter returns quickly, completely amazed to find the death wrap left behind.

The primal experiences of transformation include terror and amazement, fear, joy, and, most of all, power.⁷⁴ Easter was not about spring time renewal, the so-called rebirth of trees and plants that were never dead in winter in the first place. The cycles of physical nature have nothing to do with the

⁷⁴Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* cited in Luke Timothy Johnson, *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity: A Missing Dimension in New Testament Studies* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998), p. 64. *Kratophany* or the appearance of power in religious experience reorders conceptions of space and time. Johnson draws attention to studies from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* that clearly identified the New Testament experience as primarily an encounter and expression of power. Quoting H. Gunkel, *Influence of the Holy Spirit: A View of the Apostolic Age and the Teaching of the Apostle Paul: A Biblical-Theological Study*, Johnson writes, "'For Paul the Spirit is a power,' and if his teaching on the Spirit is to be understood, it must be in light of 'his experience of the power and the depth of his spiritual inspiration. (p. 16)" The *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* viewed the New Testament not as a compilation of theological propositions but as attestations and testimonies of experience and conviction. Pivotal in this approach was W. Wrede (1859-1906), *Über Aufgabe und Methode der sogenannten Neutestamentlichen Theologie* of 1897. See Johnson, pp. 14-15.

experience these women had on that morning. What they encountered was the bold, dynamic, disruption of the natural order of creation. What they faced was the reversal of the earth's slow process toward death and destruction. What they felt was the awe and exhilarating power of God which turned the world upside down by bringing Christ back to life from the dead. Easter is about something absolutely, extraordinarily new, never before seen, unexpected, because it is not something for which anyone looks. Easter is the glorious triumph of God. The actual, physical, historical resurrection of Jesus Christ is God's last and final word on all the sin and evil of the world. The resurrection is the final vindication of God that confirms, substantiates, assures that God is God of the living, not of the dead. The resurrection life of God that brought Jesus back to life is the same life being poured out through the Holy Spirit, who is, slowly but surely, bringing life to all that is dead and dying. When one encounters Jesus Christ, one experiences this new life. It is the *kind* of life the Holy Spirit gives. It is the life of transformation.⁷⁵

This is what the women and men experienced that first Easter - it was unique. For Christian faith and theology, the resurrection extends the horizon of being projected by Jesus himself and remains effective, because what God has done and continues to do through him has the power to transform human life and establish new horizons of meaning that the self enslaved to the ego could never achieve on its own. This is not unlike Hans-Georg Gadamer's (1900-2002) description of experience as *Erfahrung* understood as "historically effected consciousness." *Erfahrung* suggests movement, an extension out toward a future, a venturing out (*farhren*).⁷⁶ Yet, even Gadamer admits that in many ways the disciples' encounter with Jesus was a different kind of experience, "for they proclaim something that surpasses

⁷⁵Thomas F. Torrance, *Transformation and Convergence in the Frame of Knowledge: Explorations in the Interrelations of Scientific and Theological Enterprise* (Belfast: Christian Journals, Ltd., 1984). The New Testament speaks of "salvation by grace as which God 'has manifested through the epiphany of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel'." The *epiphaneia* "involves a vast *palingenesis* (regeneration) of humanity and ultimately a new heaven and a new earth. (pp. 339-340)"

⁷⁶Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, second revised edition, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1999), pp. 346-362. Gadamer favors this word to establish a phenomenology of experience instead of Wilhelm Dilthey's (1833-1911) use of the word *Erlebnis*. *Erlebnis* has a double meaning rooted in the verb *erleben*, both the immediacy of an experience that oneself has, but also the way the experience yields a sense of permanence. The sense of *Erlebnis* is too static for Gadamer because it cannot grasp the ongoing, (what Loder would see as the kinetic) continuity of historical experience and the relationship between experience and knowledge. See also James Risser, *Hermeneutics and the Voice of the Other: Re-reading Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997). "Gadamer's desire to link understanding to experience as *Erfahrung* is tied directly to the way in which this experience it itself learning, is itself knowing. (p. 85)" Curiously, *Erfahrung* is used by Hegel in the *Phenomenology of the Spirit* (which was originally entitled "The Science of the Experience of Consciousness"). It refers to an experience that one has "undergone," an encounter through which one is changed. *Erfahrung* essentially entails a transformation of that life. Risser, pp. 83-86.

their own horizon of understanding."⁷⁷ They articulate a knowledge of God, of the world, and of themselves which did not originate from within their own tradition and frame of reference. As such, Loder would say they were convicted four-dimensionally. Martin Heidegger's definition of *Erfahrung* resonates even more clearly with Loder's understanding of conviction. "To undergo an experience [*Erfahrung*] with something - be it a thing, a person, or a god - means that this something befalls us, strikes us, comes over us, overwhelms us and transforms us. When we talk of 'undergoing' an experience, we mean specifically that the experience is not of our own making; to undergo here means that we endure it, suffer it, receive it as it strikes us and submit to it."⁷⁸ For the disciples the terror and amazement were found in their own personal encounter with the Risen Christ. It should be noted that it was not dependent upon a second-hand word, not reliant upon a history, or even a tradition. It was the present moment of reality of the resurrected Lord that changed their lives. They could not encounter Jesus by going back to the past, by going back to the grave. Because, as Luke makes clear, one does not find Jesus among the dead past, at some historical marker in Jerusalem, you find him where there is life. What was true for them would be true for others who had similar testifying, convicting experiences of the Holy Spirit.

Thus, New Testament Christians did not rely upon second-hand information, second-order knowing about Jesus. Theirs was a first-hand experience of power and transformation and Loder wants to suggest that there is no reason why this cannot be true today. They *expected* to encounter God directly, not indirectly mediated through another source. The direct mediation of the Holy was offered in countless experiences of the Holy Spirit, as confirmed in Acts, in Paul's letters and beyond. These were primary experiences happening to individuals directly, not based on records of what happened to others. These encounters with the Holy Spirit were constitutive, they were originating experiences that redefined and reordered their understanding of reality.⁷⁹ Something happened to these people. What

⁷⁷Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Heidegger and Marburg Theology," (1964) in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. David E. Linge (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976), p. 210.

⁷⁸Martin Heidegger, "The Nature of Language," from *On the Way to Language* cited in James Risser, *Hermeneutics and the Voice of the Other: Re-reading Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1997), p. 288. With *Erfahrung* one can "no longer be at ease here, in the old dispensation," to quote T. S. Eliot (1888-1965), because as Heidegger would put it, "one is oneself transformed." See Robert Bernasconi, *The Question of Language in Heidegger's History of Being* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1985), p. 82. Eliot reference, "Journey of the Magi," *The Collected Poems and Plays, 1909-1950* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1971), p.68

⁷⁹John A. Mackay, *Christian Reality and Appearance* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1969). On the centrality of the transforming encounter in the Christian experience Mackay (1889-1983) writes, "God's self-disclosure of himself, which constitutes the objective, historical dimension of Christian reality, gave birth and continues to give birth to a subjective dimension - the dimension of personal religious experience. What God did for man in Christ is followed by what he does in man through

they experienced was power, the power of God's love experienced in the Spirit, a power that re-ordered the reality of everyone who came into contact with it.

Luke Timothy Johnson's recent study, *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity*, is a seminal work for our discussion here in that it calls for a reexamination of the dynamics of religious experience in order to allow us to grasp what the first Christians witnessed. What the New Testament texts point to is the unleashing of extraordinary power never witnessed before in space-time. Johnson is worth quoting at length:

The experiences articulated by these texts . . . are not mainly about quotidian matters of upkeep and maintenance, routine engagements with domestic and social realities. The New Testament shows scant interest in domestic economy, city politics, or imperial stability. The experiences expressed by these texts involve *power* but a power of a peculiar sort. It has nothing to do with rank or status derived from a place within society's disposition of military, social, or economic resources. The power is not simply physical, although it involves bodies. It is not simply mental, although it affects emotional and cognitive capacities. It is not simply individual, although it is personal. Neither is it exclusively social, although it has social consequences.⁸⁰

Perhaps most significantly, the texts do not speak of this power as something generated by or originating with those experiencing it even though those experiencing it provide the vehicle for expression. It is a power that comes from outside those touched by it and is transmitted to them from another, to whom it properly belongs. The power transmitted to them reaches external expression in various "wonders and signs," including healing and exorcisms and gifts of ecstatic speech. But it is also said to be at work in the internal transformation of human freedom.⁸¹

Thus, Johnson is extremely critical of the historical-critical studies of the last century which have been uncomfortable with a discussion of religious experience because there is no historical category to make

Christ. He meets man; he communes with man; he changes man. When man takes God seriously, responding in love to God's love for him, he becomes a new man, From thinking about God and longing for God, he experiences God. The God whom he has encountered and who has changed the direction of his life, becomes for the 'new man' both a living presence and a compulsive power. (pp. 24-25)"

⁸⁰Luke Timothy Johnson, *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity: A Missing Dimension in New Testament Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998). Three different words are used for power in New Testament Greek. *Exousia* connects a power of freedom and authority (John 1:12; 1 Cor. 6:12; 8:9; 9:4; 2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10; 2 Thess 3:6; Heb 13:10; Rev. 2:26); *energeia* suggests efficacy and energy (1 Cor. 12:6,11; 1 Thess 2:13; Phm. 6; Gal. 3:5; 5:6; Col. 1:29; Eph 3:20-21) and more frequently, *dunamis* (Rom 1:16; 15:13, 19; 1 Cor. 1:18; 6:14; 12:3; 12:28; 14:31; 15:50; 2 Cor. 1:4; 6:7; 8:3; 10:4; 12-9-10; 13:4, 9; Gal. 3:5; Eph. 3:20; 6:10; Phil 3:10, 21; 4:13; Col. 1:29; 1 Thess 1:5; 2 Thess 2:11; 1 Tim 1:7; 2:1; 4:17; 1 Tim. 1:12; Heb. 2:4; James 1:21; 2:14; 4:12; 1 Pet. 1:5; 2 Pet. 1:16. Johnson's references, p. 6.

⁸¹Beyond the references to power, Johnson also gives roughly fifty biblical references to all the points made in this quotation. On the internal transformation of human freedom see Gal. 3:5; Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor. 2:16; 2 Cor 3:18; Eph 4:23; Col 3:10; 1 Pet. 1:22. Johnson, pp. 7-8.

sense out of it. The experience of the early church is one of power, and the experiences cannot be controlled, explained, or even interpreted by historical methodologies.⁸²

This discussion compels us to raise the following questions: Is it possible to be a Christian without transformation? Or can a Christian be *formed*? If transformation has its origins in the work of God, then what is the nature of the church's teaching ministry? Is it possible to teach faith? J. Steve Rhodes has wondered if Loder's view does not lend itself to the formation of a "system which seeks to manipulate people into having a certain kind of convictional experience." In fact, Rhodes queries, "if the gratuitous healing event is the focal point of human meaning [i.e. for Loder], it is difficult not to perceive how Loder's ecclesiology would lend itself to discerning the goal of Christian education, liturgy, and pastoral counseling."⁸³ I will use this question as a framework for moving forward. Although worship and the liturgical life of the Christian were extremely important to him, Loder never fully develops these ideas.⁸⁴ However, he had much to say about transformation and Christian education, as well as the structure of convictional theology in pastoral counseling.

A. *Educating in the Spirit*

At the end of *Religious Pathology and Christian Faith*, Loder writes that "Christian education is structuring the creative act for the purpose of expanding the boundaries of freedom. Without this

⁸²Johnson identifies Ferdinand Christian Bauer's (1792-1860) histories of early Christianity as one of the first expressions of a historical-critical methodology uncomfortable with religious experiences. "The incessant quest for the 'origins' of Christianity was in no small part the search for the essential form of Christianity that was of enduring ('eternal') worth, covered over, perhaps, by the tendencies of ecclesiastical manipulation, but recoverable in principle both by the Reformation and by critical scholarship.(p. 13)" Johnson includes a quotation from Bauer which captures the *Zeitgeist* of the early nineteenth century's uncritical reliance on the historical method. "Christianity is on the one hand the great spiritual power which determines all the belief and thought of the present age, the absolute principle on which the self-consciousness of the spirit is supported and maintained, so that, unless it were essentially Christian, it would have not stability or firmness in itself at all. On the other hand, *the essential nature of Christianity is a purely historical question*, whose solution lies only *in that Past in which Christianity itself had its origin*; it is a problem which can only be solved by that critical attitude of thought which the consciousness of the present age assumes towards the Past" (emphasis added). *Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ, His Life and Work, His Epistles and His Doctrine: A Contribution to the Critical History of Primitive Christianity* (1845), cited in Johnson, p. 13.

⁸³J. Steve Rhodes, "Conversion as Crisis and Process: A Comparison of Two Models," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 5 (3): 26. Identifying Loder's work in terms of conversion (as oppose to conviction) is to misrepresent him. This is a Fowlerian reading of Loder. Rhodes critiques his ecclesiology without grasping Loder's the dialectic of the *koinonia*.

⁸⁴Apart from allusions to the worshipping community as *koinonia*, see *TTM2*, p. 70, 91, 115-116, 190; *TKM*, p. 306; *LS*, p. 170-171. Loder understands development as the drive of the human spirit searching for God whereby "the worship of God" is "an expression of the highest form of human behavior. (p. 170)"

central emphasis, it becomes fantastic, and in Kierkegaard's words: "Christian education is a lie."⁸⁵ Christian education is no longer a lie when it creates contexts of truth, where the structures are in place to foster an openness to the inner life of the Spirit and a social context that nurtures and reinforces the living out of this knowledge. The regulating principle is freedom and a determined resistance to anything that might try to curtail this creative act (such as the institution). For Loder, the task of Christian education is not to create religious beings or form Christians, but to nurture the human spirit by helping the self come to its true identity transparently grounded in the presence of Christ. Education must be done in service to the Holy Spirit, who always remains the true Teacher. It entails cooperating with the ongoing transforming work of the presence of Christ. Education in the church is less an instruction *about* Christ, as it is educating the human spirit in to the reality of Christ relating with the self.

Accordingly, Christian education cannot be seen as socialization and the faith that it teaches cannot be understood as a skill, a hobby, or a code that one learns, develops and then passes on to another generation to maintain continuity. Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic model beautifully illustrates some of the very tendencies that Loder rejects. Lindbeck writes:

[T]o be religious – no less than to become culturally or linguistically competent – is to interiorize a set of skills by practice and training. One learns how to feel, act, and think in conformity with a religious tradition that is, in its inner structure, far richer and more subtle than can be explicitly articulated. The primary knowledge is not *about* the religion, nor *that* the religious teaches such and such, but rather how to be religious in such and such ways. Sometimes explicitly formulated statements of the beliefs or behavioral norms of a religion may be helpful in the learning process, but by no means always. Ritual, prayer, and example are normally much more important.⁸⁶

Lindbeck acknowledges that a cultural-linguistic model is no less experiential or existential in its approach to religion. This way of approaching religion is not necessarily bad. A lot of good has been achieved, even by the church, operating from this perspective. It has some functional value. The problem is that such an approach is not vivifying, it never really gets to the core, existential questions of the human spirit, *What is a lifetime?* and *Why do I live it?* The danger in Lindbeck's approach is that this model always runs the risk of moving from the *pneumatic* to the *noetic* (Voegelin). Unless there is some way to cultivate and even maintain the initial conflict that the pneumatic always generates, the result will be a *noetic* talk about religion, instead of allowing one to intuitively enter and re-enter – *indwell* (Polanyi) – the generative core of religious experience. Learning to be religious becomes little more than an aid to social adjustment and institutional maintenance. Without a pneumatic corrective, learning to worship as a religious person might be merely an extension of the ego, little more than an

⁸⁵RPCF, p. 228.

⁸⁶Lindbeck, p. 35.

expression of idolatry, and actually harmful to the human spirit.⁸⁷

Loder's understanding of Christian education can best be seen in his relationship with the faith development theories often associated with the work of James Fowler. Space does not allow for a full treatment of this issue, but turning to it allows one to see how Loder's work has been received by a wider audience and more fully explicates the uniqueness of his convictional theology. In the fall of 1981, three important books were published all of them dealing with human development. Lawrence Kohlberg's *The Philosophy of Moral Development* explored the dynamics of moral development. James Fowler's *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, which applies Kohlberg's stages of moral development to an understanding of faith development. The third was Loder's *The Transforming Moment*. In a review essay of these three books, Craig R. Dykstra incorrectly refers to all of them as having to do with human transformation.⁸⁸ Kohlberg and Fowler are developmentalists and are more concerned with compassing patterns of change, primarily through stages of transition. As Dykstra acknowledges in the review, it is really only Loder who stresses the critical importance of transformation. By focusing on the process of transformation rather than the stages of development, or more correctly seeing that transformation is at work in and with the stages of development, Loder is led in a very different direction from that of Kohlberg and Fowler. We will focus on Fowler's work here.

Briefly, Fowler's study offers a "theory of growth in faith." Drawing upon the theology of Paul Tillich (1886-1965) and H. Richard Niebuhr (1894-1962), Fowler articulates a theory of faith development that seeks to understand what he calls "the universal concern" of faith.⁸⁹ As a structuralist, Fowler explains that faith develops through six stages: 1. Intuitive-Projective Faith; 2. Mythic-Literal Faith; 3. Synthetic-Conventional Faith; 4. Individuative-Reflective Faith; 5. Conjunctive Faith; 6. Universalizing Faith. A description of each stage will not detail us. Stage 6, obviously, is the most advanced expression of faith, typified by a "disciplined, activist incarnation – a making real and tangible – of the imperatives of absolute love and justice."⁹⁰ For the sake of brevity, Grannell's comparison of Fowler and Loder is useful. Fowler investigates "the social-psychological implications of a life-long search for ultimate meaning;" whereas Loder prefers to explore the theological implications of what it means to be grasped by God. Fowler "delineates the religious/ethical importance of perspectival shifts that stress increasing ego detachment," Loder calls for a radical recentering of the ego. Finally, Fowler

⁸⁷LS, p. 169.

⁸⁸Craig R. Dykstra, "Transformation in Faith and Morals," *Theology Today*, 39 (1982): 56-64.

⁸⁹James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), pp. xiii, 5.

⁹⁰Fowler, p. 200.

"establishes the heuristic power of a hierarchical schema which enumerates 'stages;'" Loder places stress upon what happens between the stages.⁹¹

In 1982, the Religious Education Association staged a debate in Lansing, Michigan between Loder and Fowler. Although Loder never refers to Fowler in *The Transforming Moment*, his "description of the work of the Holy Spirit in human transformation provided Christian educators with a credible means to critique the near normative status which . . . Fowler's faith development paradigm had accrued during that time."⁹² Their mutual critiques were later published.⁹³ Loder welcomed and commended Fowler's work, especially his study of conversion and its relation to stage development, however not without major reservations. Two in particular have to do with Fowler's definition of faith and the arbitrary way in which he came up with the stages. Loder's critique is that Fowler's work has little to do with a biblical understanding of faith.⁹⁴

But more significantly, Loder completely dismantles Fowler's methodology by showing that a developmental sequence is not normative and thereby exposing the self-contradiction of his theory. This "difficulty focuses on the problematic standpoint for the observer."

If one asks, where would anyone have to be, in the system's own way of accounting for things, to be preeminently interested in stages and the staging of the whole of human development – if one asks this, it seems unlikely that one could be beyond stage 4. If this is the case and, if one were to move into stage 5 and paradoxicality, the stages would become ambiguous; in stage 6 universality, they would appear to be of minor interest and not definitive of anything. Indeed insofar as they were thought to be definitive, they would be representative of an error with respect to the normative way of constructing meaning and being. But the normative goal of Fowler's sequence is precisely this: universalizing. What kind of a model is it that sets up a normative goal which if it is attained would expose the model itself to be inadequate and in error?⁹⁵

⁹¹Andrew Grannell, "The Paradox of Formation and Transformation," *Religious Education* 80 (1985): 388.

⁹²Dana Wright, Loder biographical essay (to be published), p. 18.

⁹³James E. Loder and James W. Fowler, "Conversations on Fowler's *Stages of Faith* and Loder's *The Transforming Moment*," *Religious Education Journal*, 77(1982): 133-148.

⁹⁴Loder is not alone in this view, Dykstra sees two different definitions at work in Fowler. See, "What is Faith? An Experiment in the Hypothetical Mode," Craig Dykstra and Sharon Parks, eds. *Faith Development and Fowler* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1986), pp. 45ff. Loder is not alone in identifying the need to critique Fowler from a theological perspective. See Richard H. Osmer's critique of Dykstra, and his dependence upon Lindbeck as leading to a "cultural relativism" with regards to theological claims, in "James W. Fowler and the Reformed Tradition: An Exercise in Theology Reflection in Religious Education," *Religious Education* 85 (1990): 66, 51-58. Osmer begins his critique of Fowler with a reference to the famous debate with Loder in which he claims that Fowler's view has little to do with a biblical understanding of faith.

⁹⁵Loder in Loder/Fowler, p. 137.

Fowler does not reply to this critique. In fact, Fowler does not register any major disagreements with Loder's approach. What he does acknowledge is that they both have very different aims. Fowler wants to reinforce his view that there is such a thing as human development and that it moves through stages. Loder will not deny this, of course. Fowler is looking for a general theory of religion which makes Loder's Christocentric paradigm problematic. In fact, Fowler admits that *TTM* is "unique in my recent experience because it tries and largely succeeds in bringing us into dangerous proximity to the transforming event of divine-human intercourse."⁹⁶

Some educational theorists have tried to hold these two perspectives – formation and transformation – in a creative tension. To some degree, like the *koinonia-ekklesia* relationship, there is a formation-transformation dialectic. But transformation will always maintain a marginal control. Grannell sees Loder's work as having "successfully challenged the idea of any unilateral formationist perspective on Christian nurture."⁹⁷ Loder holds to the claim that "Christian faith is not something that can be learned. . . . Faith is received by grace, and grace not only is not man's to administer but it conforms man to that faith which is not of himself; it shapes him into the basic form of humanity, which is the man Jesus."⁹⁸ The purpose of education in the Christian life is to awaken faith, to provide a context for individuals to encounter Christ.

The challenge before the church, to which Loder's work is an initial offering, is the need to develop educational curricula that allow us to teach transformationally. Margaret A. Krych's, *Teaching the Gospel Today: A Guide for Education in the Congregation* serves as such a model. Based on her doctoral dissertation which she wrote under Loder's supervision, Krych applies Loder's transformational narrative, the five-step pattern of convictional knowing, to the way educators talk with children about God's grace. We can more easily teach for transformation after first identifying convictional knowing operative within the Biblical narratives. She sees the sequence operative in the four gospels, especially in Jesus' exchange with Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10) and Peter's denial and restoration as told in the Gospel of John (John 13:36-38; 18: 15-18, 25-27; John 21:15-19). Indeed, she is not alone in identifying this sequence at work in scripture. Paul N. Anderson has creative use of Loder's paradigm as a way to interpret John 6, so that the thrust of the story is not merely stilling the storm, but "an awesome calming

⁹⁶Fowler in Loder/Fowler, p. 146.

⁹⁷Grannell, p. 395.

⁹⁸*RPCF*, p. 19. For Loder the epistemology of faith that reveals divine must be favored over "various philosophical theories of knowledge. Thus, idealism [, for example,] has made faith education more a matter of grasping right ideas, images, and idealized persons" Loder's entry, "Epistemology," in *Harper's Encyclopedia of Religious Education*. Iris V. Cully & Kendig Brubaker Cully, general editors (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), p. 220.

of the disciples.”⁹⁹ Krych writes, “Transformational narrative in religious education fulfills a symbolic function – it points beyond itself to God’s ultimate transforming forgiveness by grace received in faith, which gives the believer a new situation of acceptability in spite of his or her unacceptableness. If the transformational pattern in narrative communicates this message so that children respond not to the narrative itself, but to God’s saving activity in Christ, then the transformational narrative will be an agent of healing.” The objective of religious education is to lead one to an encounter with Christ, not merely the recounting of an interesting story. Krych’s work with the logic of transformation is the exception to the norm that favors a different pedagogical approach.

For example, if one looks at the present church school curriculum in the Presbyterian Church (U. S. A.) for ages three/four to eighteen, it would be obvious that the material aims to educate in terms of propositions, ideas about the faith, as well as an emphasis upon morals. The curriculum has a consistent pattern that seeks to tell the Christian story, but the purpose in telling the story is to learn the lesson and apply it to one’s life. In selected passages from the New Testament, especially the gospels, students learn that Jesus calls us to be kind and helpful toward others, loving and good. There is nothing inherently wrong with this. There is a particular ethic for the Christian walk. But the power of the gospel is more than an appeal to the ethical and the teaching of a particular morality. The good news of the Christian message is about so much more. It is a testimony to the present-day presence of God at work through Christ who continues to bring about transformation in the hearts and minds of God’s people.

Part of the present crisis of the church, therefore, is that people assume being a Christian involves merely intellectual assent to theological propositions that are grounded, hopefully, in historical evidence (e. g., Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Jesus calmed the storm. Jesus raised Lazarus from the grave. Jesus died on the cross for my sins. On the third day, God raised Jesus from the grave.) and an emphasis upon morality. What I witness in the church are individuals who believe that faith entails belief in certain propositions, primarily summed up in one of the early creeds. Again, confession is important but it must be grounded in something more than just assent. How do the creedal statements point to and participate in a deeper reality and truth? Christian faith seems to entail only holding a belief in key doctrines, where faith is devoid from action. Related to this is the view that the Christian life is primarily about learning right from wrong, learning the lessons of Jesus’ teachings. This view reduces the Christian experience to simple moralisms. Both assumptions disconnect us from the power

⁹⁹Paul N. Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Its Unity and Disunity in the Light of John 6* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1996), based on his 1988 University of Glasgow doctoral thesis. John Painter favorably reviews Anderson’s reading of the text in *Review of Biblical Literature*, 8(1997). Loder believed his insights into the logic of transformation could serve as a hermeneutical principle in the study of the Bible, especially the Gospel of John. See also Loder’s foreword in Cullen I. K. Story, *The Fourth Gospel: Its Purpose, Pattern, and Power* (Shippensburg, PA: Ragged Edge Press, 1997).

of the gospel.

Such a view also limits the expectations of what people can experience in relationship to and with God. In my experience, the overwhelming reason parents bring their children to church school is so that they learn right from wrong, develop Christian values and learn the story. It is common for university-age men and women to move away from the church (providing they grew up in the church), only to return after marriage and the birth of their first child. They look to the church to guide their children and undergird them with a morality that would be *useful*, good, and ultimately pleasing to God. Children then grow up and are socialized into the church, learn the lessons, learn the stories of the Bible. By the time they are adolescents, they know the stories very well - and they are also extremely bored! Then they begin to drift away. There is no need to be in church because they have learned all that they need to learn. They will return when their children need to hear the story and learn the lessons. As for the adults, once their children have moved through church school and reach adolescents very often they, too, start to drift away from active participation in the church. They know the story and do not expect to hear anything they have not already heard. I also witness older adults who have been in the church their entire lives, who know the Bible stories (even better than the clergy) but do not expect to hear anything new. In such a setting there is no expectation that there can be anything new. The church functions to preserve a dead tradition, to tell the same old story, to reinforce a socially contrived morality. In such a context there is little expectation of experiencing the present reality of Christ who comes to enliven, to make new, to transform human life and society.

Loder's work leads us to question whether or not our reliance upon story (including the telling of history which is obviously a story, a narration of events) is a blessing or a curse for the church. Story has become a hot-topic within the church over the past couple of years. Ministers and educators today are learning how to become storytellers, developing imaginative ways of making the stories of the Bible come alive to the contemporary reader and hearer. We are invited to think about the story of our lives, "our story," as part of "God's story."¹⁰⁰ In truth, the members of a church, as preservers of the story, know the stories of the Bible. Christians know the stories all too well. Placing considerable trust in narration alone to convey theological truth, truth that has the power to transfigure reality is highly dubious.¹⁰¹ Indeed, it is questionable whether the stories can actually produce the same kind of

¹⁰⁰There are a plethora of books on the importance of story in the church. See Thomas E. Boomershine, *Story Journey: An Invitation to the Gospel as Storytelling* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988) and Walter Brueggemann, *The Creative Word: Canon as a Model for Biblical Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982). Brueggemann sees the story as a distinctively Jewish and Christian way of epistemology, pp. 22-23ff.

¹⁰¹In this sense theologians need to pay attention to Benedetto Croce's (1866-1952) statement that "all history is contemporary history." *The Theory and History of Historiography* (1916). "Historians are increasingly aware," writes George Steiner on the subject of language and narrative, "that

transformation apart from the presence of the Holy Spirit. Knowing about Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection are important things to know. But unless that which Christ gained on our behalf in his death and resurrection is experienced in the Spirit mediating that power, we remain distant and cut off from the vitality of the Gospel. Lessons *about* and stories *about* Jesus cannot be substitutes for encounters with Jesus in the present.¹⁰²

The purpose of education in the church is to awaken faith, to provide a context for an individual to encounter Christ. In that encounter, as mediated by the Holy Spirit, one experiences the transforming work of God in the world *today*. Richard Robert Osmer identifies the dangers of seeing Christian education as merely the transmission of information or knowledge and argues; instead, the "the goal of teaching is to create a context in which faith is awakened, supported, and challenged. . . ."¹⁰³ Teaching the faith involves teaching for belief, teaching for relationship that draws people into a living relationship with a living God, teaching for commitment, and teaching that is open to mystery. The role of the teacher, Osmer believes, is to "serve as an instrument in the meeting of the Holy Spirit and the human spirit, the Word of God and human words of confession. Accepting the limits of our teaching is a way of acknowledging the mystery that is a part of faith."¹⁰⁴

Loder's challenge to the teaching ministry of the church has exciting possibilities for homiletic

the conventions of narrative and of implicit reality with which they work are philosophically vulnerable." George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, Second Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 140.

¹⁰²Whether or not a particular story 'captures' the past event and conveys the reality of that event needs to be critically examined in light of our discussion. "What wish is enacted, what desire is gratified by the fantasy that *real* events are properly represented when they are shown to display the formal coherence of a story?" Hayden White, "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality," in *On Narrative*, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 4, cited in David Carr, *Time, Narrative, and History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 11. Carr and others argue that narrative is not a flight from reality, but an extension of "pattern and configurations" built into reality (p. 16). Cf. also Alasdair MacIntyre's chapter, "Virtues, Unity of Life and Concept of a Tradition," in *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, Second Edition (London: Duckworth, 1990), pp. 204-225 who argues in favor of the importance of narrative structures in establishing a connection to reality, that narratives are integral to daily life. ". . . we always move towards placing a particular episode in the context of a set of narrative histories, histories both of the individuals concerned and of the settings in which they act and suffer. . . . we render the actions of other intelligible in this way because action itself has a basically historical character. It is because we all live out narratives in our lives and because we understand our own lives in terms of narratives that we live out the form of narrative appropriate for understanding the actions of others." Thus, "we are never more (sometimes less) than the co-authors of our own narratives. (pp. 212-213)" Informed by Loder, I believe that it is precisely our narratives that need to be transformed and re-narrated by the One Who can truly narrate our lives.

¹⁰³Richard Robert Osmer, *In Teaching for Faith: A Guide for Teachers of Adult Classes* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press 1992), p. 22.

¹⁰⁴Osmer, p. 22-38, 38.

theory. This is one area of Loder's thinking that has yet to be explored: How does one preach for transformation? The sermon is more than the transmission of information *about* Jesus. It is not a lecture. It is an invitation to participate in the transforming life of Christ. Is it possible to create a transformational context in the sermon that somehow *releases* the transformational pattern, leading to a "meeting of the Holy Spirit and the human spirit (Osmer)"? If so, then the role of conflict will have a major part in the preaching moment. This is a rich area for further research and reflection.¹⁰⁵

B. Counseling in the Spirit

One place where we see Loder being an educator, awakening faith in individuals is through his experience as a therapist. In his essays, articles, and books, Loder widely draws upon what he has learned over the years as a counselor, amassing considerable insight into the human condition as he tries to speak to human need from within the heuristic of his convictional theology. This is an aspect of his work that has been left completely unexamined. In addition to his own description of cases sprinkled through his writings, there are literally hundreds (maybe thousands) of individuals who have gone to him for counseling.

Loder began his clinical training at the Massachusetts Mental Health Clinic in Boston, followed by time at the Menninger Clinic during the 1960's and worked with individuals (primarily students) in Princeton for close to forty years. Although it would be difficult to prove this, I would suggest that those who counseled with him over the years know best the extraordinary impact and integrity of his convictional theology.¹⁰⁶ In those counseling sessions Loder modeled and practiced what he believed, preached, taught, and theorized about throughout his writings. Combining his enormous grasp of the psychoanalytic tradition and a profound insight and respect for the work of the Holy Spirit at work in the world and in the lives of all people, Loder *provided new frameworks for the Christian life by extending a marvelous vision of what life can be like in Jesus Christ and holding this up as a possibility for everyone.*

¹⁰⁵No one, to my knowledge, has begun to explore this issue. Learning from Loder, the use of conflict is an important element in my preaching. I have found that the more comfortable I am in addressing, creating, and/or exposing the inherent conflict within human life, the more engaging the sermon becomes - both for me and the listeners. When exposed, the Gospel can then speak to the place of greatest conflict and human need. Indeed, we begin to learn that even the conflict itself can become a place of meeting, a sacred place, where the face of the void becomes the face of God.

¹⁰⁶The proof for this claim will be found in the accounts of people who did psychotherapy with him, locked away in their private journals or diaries, enfolded in their ministry, expressed in their sermons, further modeled in pastoral counseling sessions in their parishes. Since his death, there is already a need to get in touch with people who worked with him so that they can give an account. I was privileged to have a therapeutic relationship with him for two and a half years. Recently, Kenda Dean said she knew of people who were in counseling for years and never got anywhere until they met Loder. This is an aspect of his life that needs to be preserved.

Loder believed the entire logic of transformation was expressed in the "Carmen Christi" (the song of Christ) of Philippians 2: 5-11, a song that was sung, as it were, in his counseling sessions. In Loder's reading of the text, he sees Paul holding out a claim for the Philippians that they *already* had within them. Their responsibility was to "let it be." The pattern of Christ - the crucifixion and liberation pattern of his life - was already at work in their lives through the Spirit. When Paul implores them to let or "have this mind among you which is yours in Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:5)," Loder interprets this as a plea to "let Christ's way become the way that defined them," and paraphrases this verse in the following way: "Let transformation after this pattern unfold you."¹⁰⁷ One could debate whether or not this is an accurate paraphrase of Paul's intent, nevertheless it provides an invaluable insight into Loder's own methodology. The invitation that Loder sees Paul extending to the church in Philippi is a desire he hopes for everyone. He wants to see the life of Christ unfold in and through the individual, bringing the human spirit to life. Moments of conviction have persuaded Loder that what was afforded him, the Spirit of Christ affords to everyone. In this way "convictional experiences are invitations or moments of awakening" in which one discovers that "the void is not bottomless" because God:

... call[s] us into the resurrected life of Christ, who filling all in all, seeks to actualize that fulfillment through the transformation of all human life (Ephesians 1: 23, 4:13). The convicting experience is saying, "Don't be afraid - trust and live. Live beyond the boundaries of the shelters you have built up against the void. Live in the transparency of the self with the Holy."¹⁰⁸

This is the vital nerve of the Christian life, living transparently in the presence of God.

Upholding a non-reductionist, interdisciplinary methodology, transformation cannot be understood functionally as a means of producing mental health; similarly psychological techniques cannot be used to manipulate religious experience. Theology and psychology must be mutually edifying and correcting.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, one must not assume that the objectives of the Spirit are the same as the psychotherapist. Clinical work is more than simply "psychological adjustment" or simply "damage control." The Spirit will not be "used" to help psychically troubled individuals simply to function in a society that is predominately sick to begin with. Theologically, health is not determined by merely being able to function in society - when society is probably the chief cause of illness. As a result, Loder cautions us against the way religion or faith has been used by parents and institutions (like the church) in order to help an individual function in a given society. Sick religion reinforces and sanctifies a sick

¹⁰⁷TTM2, p. 148.

¹⁰⁸TTM2, p. 121.

¹⁰⁹Cf. Loder's entry "Theology and Psychology" in *The Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*. Rodney J. Hunter, general editor (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), p. 1270: "The aim of the task of relating theology and psychology should be mutual correction for the sake of a mutually enlightening contribution of what is most fully and truly human about our common humanity."

society making it all the more difficult to hear and be open to the life-transforming power of the Spirit who yearns to bring healing and freedom for the self. Indeed, it is only a Christomorphic transformation that gives one the ability to move out beyond the social structures that hinder the self.

Given this assessment, it is significant to note that no where does Loder address the origins of mental illness. He was very familiar with and interested in current brain research theory.¹¹⁰ Penfield remained his primary guide because he retained a place for the human spirit that was not reductionistically defined by chemical reactions in the brain. Underneath the disturbed ego is a spirit that longs for liberation and goes to extraordinary lengths (sometimes maladaptively) to seek freedom. The Christian community would have been better served had Loder taken more time to articulate a theologically informed understanding of mental illness from the perspective of the obstructed desires of the human spirit. Nevertheless, in examining his methodology, especially in his case studies, one finds Loder always searching to connect with the drives of the human spirit at work underneath the neurosis or even psychosis. For example, in dealing with depression, Loder tried to find a way to speak to the human spirit who was *experiencing* the depression, searching for the self that was expressing itself in a depressed state. One's identity must never be confused with the illness. One is always more than the illness. A person enslaved to depression knows, for example, that underneath there is still a self that longs for freedom and healing. Loder is always making an appeal for the fractured self.

In the transparency with God the self never loses its identity, but *finds* its true self made whole in the relationship with Christ. This cannot be stressed enough - Loder's theology is person focused.¹¹¹ It is for the sake of the anguished creature that God sent the Son. To ignore this dimension of his thought is to misunderstand his primary objective. As we saw in chapters one and two, conviction always makes

¹¹⁰See Loder's review of James B. Ashbrook *The Human Mind and the Mind of God: Theological Promise in Brain Research* in *Religious Education* 81 (1986): 655-656. On contemporary theories concerning contemporary neuro-scientific approaches to faith see Andrew Newberg, Eugene D'Aquili, Vince Rause, *Why God Won't Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2002). According to my research, there has been no significant response to Loder's work from the psychoanalytic community. In many ways, his interdisciplinary approach and the unconventional incorporation of theology and psychoanalytic theory beyond pattern maintenance and psycho-social adjustment have obstructed a view and therefore a reception of his work.

¹¹¹In the only article that explores the psychotherapeutic dimensions of Loder's theology, Patrick M. Barker is correct to note that what is offered is "a client-centered spiritual direction where the emphasis is on enabling [one] to attend and respond to the Holy Spirit in his or her life." But he is somewhat inaccurate in that Loder's approach was more than simply spiritual direction. Barker neglects to see the psychoanalytic foundations of his work. He also critiques Loder's approach for being too "conflict-centered rather than growth-centered." This is a remarkable claim given that implicit to transformation is human growth. His claim that also fails to grasp the potentially creative element of conflict. In the end, Barker suggests that Loder's paradigm is only useful for moments when "crisis counseling" is needed. What Barker fails to see that life itself *is* the crisis that continually demands resolution. "The Relevance of James Loder's Grammar of Transformation for Pastoral Care and Counseling," *The Journal of Pastoral Care*, 49 (1995): 164-166.

a place for the "I," and grants the "I" freedom to live from beyond the power of the ego. In the presence of the otherness of Christ, in and through the relationship one comes to know oneself. Apart from that mirroring reflection, one is left to see in a "glass dimly" (1 Corinthians 13: 12). With Christ we see "face to face." (1 Cor. 13:13). Conviction never extinguishes, annihilates, or destroys the ego or the self, but recenters the personality in Christ, affirms the inherent ascriptive worth of the self and mirrors back to the individual one's true identity as a child of God.¹¹² Worth and identity can *only* be established by Christ - not through the mirroring of one's peers, social network, parents, teachers, or anyone else. Only Christ has the authority and the ability to truly mediate reality, the truth, and one's true identity. Loder might be charged with a kind of "Christological imperialism," and such a accusation would be justified if one ignored his personalist dimension. He makes these claims for and about Christ because of the extraordinary implications they have for a fearful ego struggling to achieve and defensively protect its own imperial domain.¹¹³ This quotation captures the thrust of Loder's personalism:

It takes a universe and more to create a child, and it takes a "love that surpasses knowledge" (Eph. 3: 19) to cast out the fear that reverberates between the internal emptiness of persons and the vast emptiness of outer space. To see that this silent resonance of emptiness is the obverse side of a love so great it can be comprehended only from the inside out as human emptiness is filled with all the fullness of God, is to have been grasped by the Spirit of God in total transformation. It is to have experienced from the ground up a transformation of one's lifetime so complete that all proximate transformations are themselves transformed into subparts of the whole.¹¹⁴

Thus, in making a room for the "I," Loder sees God demonstrating a profound desire to maintain the integrity of the person at all costs. With this comes the knowledge of God's extraordinary respect for the human spirit, a God whose love is inexorable in its determination to grant freedom to the human spirit.¹¹⁵

¹¹²Cf. Loder's approach and that of Hans Hofmann, "The good news of the Christian faith consists basically of the divine determination to give new meaning and purpose to individual and community life. The religious challenge to the feeling of helplessness in the face of seemingly uncontrollable forces is the insistence that there is a power greater than any personal or external circumstances. This power of God seeks first of all to integrate the personality in order that it may exert itself in the world through people who have found that with God's help they can take an active and creative stand in dealing with the world." *Religion and Mental Health, Religion and Mental Health: A Casebook with Commentary and An Essay on Pertinent Literature* (New York: Harper, 1961), p. 252. These are the introductory words to a case study written by Loder when he was Hofmann's research assistant at Harvard.

¹¹³Steven S. Ivy makes this observation in his review of *The Logic of the Spirit*. See *Journal of Pastoral Care* 53(1999): 496.

¹¹⁴LS, p. 15.

¹¹⁵The Emmaus Road account in Luke 24 had a special meaning for Loder, especially when Jesus asked of his walking companions, "What is this conversation which you are holding with each other as

His counseling technique consisted of holding up the image of Christ which was at work in everyone - whether one knows it or not. Drawing upon his use of the hypnagogic vision and the trust he put in the creative power of the imagination to "choose" new ways of being in response to the mediation of an image, Loder held out the image of Christ. He viewed "*Jesus Christ as the master image* who presents the personality with the occasion to experience transformation. . ."¹¹⁶ By holding out the image of Christ, Christ becomes that mirror in which the self can choose either for or against the image. The encounter with the image of Christ overcomes the eikonic eclipse in that the exchange allows us to see what we cannot see on our own - namely, the power of sin at work in all areas of our lives which is slowly killing us. We can either face the truth and acknowledge our sinfulness ("choose for the neurosis") or live in a two-dimensional denial where we continue to live but are never fully alive.¹¹⁷ By inviting one to become who one really is, one is thrown into conflict and intensification at the same time. In the tension one is called to live into the image of Christ and in this way Christ as Mediator mediates a new image of the self, the void, the world, and even God. Throughout the course of counseling (and throughout his writings), he consistently extended this image of Christ - of love, of acceptance, of freedom - and held out the challenge to allow the image to define one's life, as if saying, "*This is who you really are. Live into the image of the One who is recreating you according to His image.*" He imbued amazing confidence in the power of God and in the power of the self to realize its deepest needs in the Spirit. This is realized through the relationship of Spirit-to-spirit.

If convictional theology hinges on the inter-relationship of the Holy Spirit to the human spirit, then to separate, confuse or conflate this distinction will lead to considerable chaos in the way the church talks about spirituality. In many way, this is the present state of things. Throughout the culture, spirituality (with all its manifold definitions) is extremely popular. Generally speaking, spiritual growth is understood as a development of the human spirit, of ways to grow the self. Loder's work therefore offers a powerful critique of the pervasive interest in spirituality in the contemporary church and beyond it. If we are to use the word "spirituality" in the church, then we must be clear whether we are talking

you walk? (vs. 17)" I heard Loder lecture on this text several times and each time he paused after reading this verse, overcome by emotion, as if overwhelmed by the awareness of Christ's singular regard for the otherness of the self, as a *thou* before Jesus. As an aside, it was not uncommon for Loder to become very emotional during his lectures, even moved to tears when talking about the love of Christ. On the first day of a new course he usually warned the class that he might become emotional and even cry, to which he would say, "If this bothers you, that's your problem, not mine."

¹¹⁶TKM, p. 256. Italics in the text. Loder sees Kierkegaard's focus upon the God-man, "The Absolute Paradox" as operating in a similar mode.

¹¹⁷TTM2, p. 168: "The work of the mediating image [namely, the presence of Christ] is both to externalize for the personal ego the underlying threat of nothingness and at the same time supply a new context of meaning that embraces and transcends it. Thus the image becomes the Face of God, relativizing the ego and at the same time setting it free."

about opening ourselves up to the Holy Spirit of God or merely using religious language to describe something that is only human.¹¹⁸ If the Holy Spirit is separated from the work of Christ, the Spirit is “separated from the objective revelation and reconciling work that orients the Spirit and the way is open for general spirits in creation giving rise to amorphous spiritualities defined by human spiritual experiences rather than the Holy Spirit of God.”¹¹⁹ When the Holy Spirit is conflated with the human spirit, then spirituality becomes little more than ego or self-development, sanctified navel gazing (*incurvatus in se*), thus eclipsing the possibility of the Holy to accomplish for the ego what it could never achieve on its own.

Convictional experiences and the new life they generate are thus defined by an increased awareness of the importance of intimacy.¹²⁰ The relational component of the Christian life takes on greater intensity and importance when it is seen primarily as an experience of intimacy. Intimacy is a face-to-face indwelling in the presence of Christ, where the relationship Spirit-to-spirit takes on a life of its own through prayer. Matthew J. Frawley notes that this is one of the major themes that Loder identifies and values in Kierkegaard, the centrality of intimacy in the Christian experience.¹²¹ In *The Logic of the Spirit*, Loder explores at length the importance of intimacy in convictional experiences:

Intimacy derives from the Latin *intimus*, and refers to the innermost place in oneself at the core of one's identity. Here one may say correctly, ‘You may know what it is like to be me, but you will never know what it is for me to be me.’ In an intimate relationship, what it is ‘for me to be me’ is disclosed as openly as possible, each one to the other. When each side receives the other with accurate empathy, then a synergy is generated that can make such a relationship feel almost like an interpersonal trance.” This is the basis for prayer and why one's true identity emerges from the intimacy of prayer.¹²²

Prayer then becomes for Loder one of the most powerful aspects of the Christian life, because through prayer one abides in and with the presence of Christ (John 15: 4).

To abide or indwell in the presence of a loving Other, Christ mediates an image of the self. It

¹¹⁸Loder did not understand the Christian life in terms of spiritual growth and only rarely used the term. I rarely use it in my ministry. Jesus never called his disciples to be spiritual, but to be *disciples*.

¹¹⁹Frank Rogers, Jr. “Karl Barth's Faith Epistemology of the Spirit as a Critical and Constructive Framework for Christian Education,” (Doctoral dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1991), p. 125. Loder was Roger's advisor.

¹²⁰*TTM2*, p. 122: “The essence of convictional knowing is the intimacy of the self with its Source.”

¹²¹Matthew J. Frawley, “Loder on Kierkegaard,” *The Princeton Theological Review*, VII (2000): 14. Kierkegaard wrote: “His intimacy surrounds you everywhere; it is offered to you at every moment: in this intimacy in the decision you are with the good.” *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*. Translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 107.

¹²²*LS*, p. 61. Italics in the text.

is a dwelling defined and sustained by the movement of love that maintains the relationship. "God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. (1 John 4: 16)" Yet, the greatest resistance to this intimacy is the ego. The human spirit longs for the face of God and the ego is ever-reluctant to seek God's face. Whether in a human-to-human love relationship or a human-to-divine one, this fear of intimacy "has deep roots in the personality because our primal association with a genuine face-to-face intimacy is absence."¹²³ In intimacy we fear both absorption in the other, as well as the fear of rejection, abandonment, and, maybe even a sense of our own death. No person can satisfy the "primal longing for a face that will not go away."¹²⁴ This can only be given in "a convincing sense of the Spiritual Presence of Christ, the Face of God."¹²⁵ Human intimacy is one of the greatest threats to the ego, making the possibility of intimacy with God even greater. "The idea of intimacy with the Holy is a paradox too great for us to entertain, but it is just such intimacy that establishes the authority of the Holy for itself."¹²⁶ Yet, this is the very thing that the human spirit craves. Loder's counseling technique in many respects sought to model the *koinonia* - a social environment that nurtures the human spirit as it seeks to live convictionally. In his desire to support the "inner life," he pushed every "client" to seek that place of intimacy with God in prayer.

Loder challenged every individual to become authentically oneself by pushing one to a deeper intimacy with the spiritual presence of Christ, thus allowing Christ to mediate one's identity.¹²⁷ As a result, Loder's vision of the Christian life entails the formation of unique individuals in the presence of Christ. This is not an individualistic vision. Instead, he wants us to see that Christ's relationship with the self is unique for every person. It is particular because *love* itself is particular. In an extremely poignant expression of love in the Christian experience, Loder defined it this way: "the non-possessive delight in the particularity of the other one."¹²⁸ Love *sees* the other and does not confuse itself with the other. Love allows the other to exist in freedom and creates a space for the other to be. Love does not

¹²³ *TTM2*, p. 175.

¹²⁴ This is why for Loder human love cannot ultimately meet the needs of the human spirit. When the primal longing is satisfied in the face of Christ - the face that will not go away - then the "person is free to give the quality of love that does not try to make the other person into the missing face." *TTM2*, p. 175.

¹²⁵ *TTM2*, p. 175.

¹²⁶ *TTM2*, p. 90.

¹²⁷ He often said, "You're no better than your mediator."

¹²⁸ *LS*, pp. 266-267. See also *TKM*, p. 279. Although never articulated by Loder, this definition appears to be informed by Kierkegaard's discussion of "particularity" and love in *Works of Love: Some Christian Reflections in the Form of Discourses*, trans. Howard and Edna Hong, preface by R. Gregor Smith (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964), p. 143.

try to possess the other, control it, define it or delimit it. Love transforms the other from an *it* into a *thou*. Love allows the other to be, existing apart from itself, taking immense delight and joy in the particularity, the uniqueness, the incomparability of the other. As a result, the other is brought to life and allowed to thrive. Love "earnestly desires the fulfillment of the unique particularity of the other one." Loder claims that this is exactly what happens in conviction and it describes the kind of love that conviction itself creates. "This is not obscure to the lover who has known love through the spiritual presence of Christ; indeed, this is precisely how one has experienced the love of God - intimately, knowing better than I do what it means for me to be me and in liberation, as in 'for freedom Christ has set us free,' so I am possessed only by the One who sets me free."¹²⁹

Because the Christian experience is governed by the love of the Spirit operating relationally with the human spirit, Loder's vision is a corrective to those who have reduced the value of the Christian experience to a kind of Kantian moralism or a striving after moral perfection. Perhaps this is why throughout Loder's writings there is very little discussion about sin - although the ego confounded in its ability to love is certainly an expression of the power of sin. The Christian life for Loder is not a matter of following rules in order to make God happy or emulating Christ as some moral ideal. Discussions of morality often take place at Kierkegaard's aesthetic stage and therefore cannot be the source of freedom for the self.¹³⁰ Love is not an ethical duty that can be achieved by the human spirit. The capacity to love is given through a wider loving relationship with God who *is* love (1 John 4:7). The command to love would be oppressive if it were not for the fact that God gives the human spirit the ability to love in the intimacy of the Spirit.¹³¹ In contradistinction to the prevailing views of Alasdair MacIntyre and others, the Christian must not be obsessed with morality, rules, the seeking after virtues, and the enacting of practices to help form or shape a Christian life.¹³² Instead, the Christian life consists of an openness to the ongoing enfleshment of the Spirit in the work of humanization no matter how unconventional or radical that might be.

¹²⁹LS, p. 267.

¹³⁰NRC, pp. 462-463. An article by Seward Hiltner which has been designated "one of the clearest expositions that have ever been made of the real contribution of Sigmund Freud and . . . of Freud's actual impact on the relationship of religion, psychology and psychiatry," Hiltner writes, "It was not morality, nor a sensitivity to culture, that Freud found devastating in his patients, but a legalistic morality of conformity containing understanding neither of one's self nor of culture." "Freud, Psychoanalysis, and Religion," *Pastoral Psychology*, VII (1956), p. 9ff cited by Loder in NRC, p. 463.

¹³¹Frawley notes that Kierkegaard's *Works of Love* must not be seen as Kierkegaard's great work on Christian ethics, as an overwhelming majority of commentators have done (p. 14). Ethics must be first grounded in one's relationship with God - then one discovers how to love with particularity.

¹³²Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, second edition (London: Duckworth, 1985). See also Craig Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1999).

There is no room for an ethical idealism in Loder's theology because this would deny the personal, relational aspects of the spiritual presence of Christ at work today in the world. Neither is Loder advocating that all Christians must follow the same pattern and be alike, because this would remove the sense of particularity that comes with the experience of love. Through Christ, John Baillie notes, "it is no mere law that is revealed to us, but a living Person, and what we call the moral law is but an abstraction which our limited and limiting minds make from the concreteness of the living Glory that is revealed."¹³³ Similarly, Loder wants to hold up the personal and sees the Christian life as an experience of humanization or rehumanization, "of keeping human life human," which is the work of the Spirit. As Irenaeus (c.115-190) claimed in *Against the Heresies*, "The glory of God is the human person fully alive," so, too, Loder's humanism seeks to further advance the glory of God. Humanization is a movement down and in, as if into the soil out of which our creatureliness is formed. It is learning to be a *creature* dependent upon the Creator. Only life in the Spirit can define and grant such a fully human life.¹³⁴ Thus, sanctification involves not becoming like Christ (as in a copy or replica), but conforming to the image of Christ who as the fully human one (as true creature) was relationally dependent and intimate with the Father, whose identity was grounded firmly in that relationship. Life in the Spirit is a process of becoming authentically human, that is learning what it means to be a redeemed creature in the presence of God.¹³⁵

V. Critical Engagement of the World

The *telos* of conviction is to allow greater engagement with the created order so that when individuals come alive in the Spirit of Christ the glory of God is revealed throughout the world, so that

¹³³John Baillie, *Our Knowledge of God* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), pp. 162-163. "What we have most fundamentally to do with in religion is not a demand that is being made upon us but a gift that is being offered to us."

¹³⁴See also Eberhard Jüngel's important essay, "On Becoming Truly Human," *Theological Essays, II*, Edited with an Introduction by J. B. Webster; Translated by Arnold Neufeldt-Fast and J. B. Webster. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), pp. 216ff. "Human persons do not decide who they truly are. . . . It is essential to the human person to exist in relation to others and in relation to God. For only the one for whom it is essential to be manifest before another longs for recognition. The human person is essentially a person in the presence of . . . that is, human in relation to One is essentially human before God (*coram deo*) and human before the forum of the world (*coram mundo*)." The "true humanity of human persons" from a biblical perspective leads us to affirm that, "only as the human 'I' is addressed not only about itself, but rather addressed in such a way that it is simultaneously claimed by something outside itself, that one is really speaking about the human 'I' as such. (pp. 220-221)"

¹³⁵Cf. John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1993), p. 58. ". . . salvation is not a matter of moral perfection, an improvement of nature, but a new hypostasis of nature, a new creation, . . . this new hypostasis is not something theoretical, but a historical experience, even though it is not permanent." See also Colin E. Gunton, *Christ and Creation* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 1992), pp. 25-27.

human being becomes, as Kathryn Tanner put it, "the administrative center of cosmic-wide service."¹³⁶ As we have seen, the four-dimensional existence of the Christian is a *this* worldly one, and not an otherworldly one. Loder's incarnational emphasis sees the movement of the Spirit in the Christian life as moving one down and in, not up and out. As Elizabeth Frykberg put it, "When persons recognize that Jesus Christ is 'for' them, they also come to understand the he is 'for' the church and world, as well."¹³⁷ The transforming presence of Christ creates a field of encounter, a New Creation, a new reality that is defined by God's grace. If the Spirit of Christ is the creator of this field, working with the desire to bring everyone into the redemptive reality even as he is participating in the new reality, then Loder leads us to believe that the Spirit is at work in the world wherever people are coming to life, whether they know it is through Christ or not. The experience of the Spirit does not cut us off from the world, but grants a greater identification and participation in the world.¹³⁸ The Christian can only extend the hope of the Gospel on behalf of the world from the firm conviction that the Spirit of Christ is present in the lives of all people, bringing people to life by enabling them to affirm the goodness of life and the love of God in the face of the void, allowing people to say *Yes!* in the face of everything and everyone who utters *No!* The Spirit confronts, reveals, and provides a way through the nothingness. In the place of such nothingness the Spirit is extending life. Loder's pneumatology challenges theologians and clergy - indeed every Christian - to expect and eagerly look for the Spirit at work in the world, moving over the chaos of the world and bringing the power of the resurrection to those enslaved to the power of death.¹³⁹

When the Christian exists four-dimensionally it yields a particular kind of experience, a present-oriented phenomenon in a field of encounter with the Holy Spirit who is eschatologically constituting reality in which the self is thereby freed to live with what Loder has called a "mundane ecstasy."¹⁴⁰ The Christian experience is not escapist, but consists of a re-emergence *into* the world. The Spirit thrusts the human spirit into the world with extraordinary intensity. "We usually think of *ec-static* as taking us

¹³⁶Kathryn Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity and the Trinity: A Brief Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), p. 60. Tanner alludes to Irenaeus' "administrative anthropocentrism" in Paul Santmire, *The Travail of Nature* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1985), p. 42.

¹³⁷Elizabeth Frykberg, "Karl Barth's Theological Anthropology: An Analogical Critique Regarding Gender Relations," *Studies in Reformed Theology and History*, I (1993): 19

¹³⁸A similar point is made by Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), pp. 99ff.

¹³⁹Cf. Christoph Blumhardt, *Action in Waiting*, Foreword by Rodney Clapp; Afterword by Karl Barth (Farmington, PA: The Plough Publishing House, 1998), p. 39.

¹⁴⁰*TTM2*, p. 109. Colin Gunton observes in scripture, "the Spirit is God being eschatological." "We Believe in the Holy Spirit, Who with the Father and the Son Is Worshiped and Glorified," in Joseph D. Small, Editor, *Fire and Wind: The Holy Spirit in the Church Today* (Louisville: Geneva Press, 2002), p. 22.

out of our senses," Loder points out, "and therefore out of the world known and shared with others. Being beside oneself, as the word suggests, and so 'out of the body' in some sense, is, of course, a possibility; but it is not a distinctively Christian form of ecstasy, although such ecstasy does occur in Christian experience (2 Corinthians 12: 1-4)."¹⁴¹ Instead, Loder wants to stress a different image, no doubt grounded in his own convictional experiences, as well as his reading of Kierkegaard:

In Christian ecstasy, one is beside oneself in depth as well as height, so to say. In the ecstasy of Christian experience, one perceives the world of common experience in a new way; one becomes absorbent of almost more "mundaneness" than can be contained. One is beside oneself in the perception of particularity and the essential goodness of being itself. This is a direct reflection of one's awakening to one's own particularity and goodness as given by grace. This is to say, one comes into Christ's World – his intended creation – out of those "worlds" that produce self-alienation.¹⁴²

When the Christian is thrown at the world through the Spirit the entire world is illuminated in a whole new light. The Christian is "free to indwell and compose his World in all of its particularity, fascination, and beauty. One's eyes are opened to the particularity of goodness and the goodness of being-itself when one's own particular being has been embraced and affirmed by Christ Jesus, in whom being-itself became particular."¹⁴³ "To experience 'mundane ecstasy' is to recognize the world God so loved. The thrust of transformation, then, is not to discover how to do things spiritually, but to discover the Spirit of Christ and choose his world."¹⁴⁴

The Spirit puts one into the world in a process of *historicization*, whereby one is thrust into time-space. When the Holy Spirit as the giver of life grants the life-giving power of Christ, an individual is situated in a world of openness and freedom. Because the Spirit is continuing the work of Christ, the Spirit enfleshes the human spirit, creating a context and framework to live with intensity and embodiment. One is placed more firmly in one's skin. The Holy Spirit thereby *historicizes* the human spirit, placing one into the flow of reality in time-space. The Spirit embeds the Christian in time-space and yet the Christian is not completely bound to the contingencies of time-space. The Christian moves with the Spirit and is not limited to the present because the Spirit is continually opening up the future and increasingly placing one firmly into reality with freedom and love.¹⁴⁵ The Christian is not supposed to be stuck in the past, nor limited by the present, or even living in fear of the future.

Four-dimensionality creates a field of encounter in which one lives, and moves and has being.

¹⁴¹ *TTM2*, p. 109.

¹⁴² *TTM2*, p. 109.

¹⁴³ *TTM2*, pp. 109-110.

¹⁴⁴ Tom Brownell's review of *The Transforming Moment*, Epiphany 3 (1982): 92-93.

¹⁴⁵ *LS*, p. 334.

Jürgen Moltmann's description of life in the Spirit serves as a wonderful summary of and points to what I think Loder is trying to articulate:

When the heart expands and we stretch our limbs, and feel the new vitality everywhere, then life unfolds in us. But it needs a living space in which it can develop. Life in the Spirit is a life in the 'broad place where there is no cramping' (Job 36:16). So in the new life we experience the Spirit as a 'broad place' - as the free space for our freedom, as the living space for our lives, as the horizon inviting us to discover life. 'The broad place' is the most hidden and most silent presence of God's Spirit in us and round about us. But how else could 'life in the Spirit' be understood, if the Spirit were not the space 'in' which this life can grow and unfurl? We explore the depths of this space through the trust of the heart. We search out the length of this space through extravagant hope. We discover the breadth of this space through the torrents of love which we receive and give. God's Spirit encompasses us from all sides and wherever we are (Ps. 139). Christ's Spirit is our immanent power to live - God's Spirit is our transcendent space for living.¹⁴⁶

The Holy Spirit opens up the human spirit so that it no longer turns inward, but can be free to turn outward in love toward the world. All the energy that was previously used to protect the ego is now released with passion for the world and life itself.

It should be noted that although Loder's four-dimensionality might appear to reflect a form of Platonism, this is not the case. As we have seen throughout, Loder is trying to remove all dualisms and move to a more holistic, gestalt-like understanding of reality. The gestalt is a part of the whole. What is required in the Christian life is a figure-ground shift in which the true reality of Christ's redeeming presence be seen as the truer reality. The world and all it contains belongs to God (Psalm 24:1), which means that the work of the Spirit consists of educating the human spirit to the reality that one is *already* participating in the life of God - whether one knows it or not. Four-dimensionality always results in a paradigm or figure-ground gestalt shift in which the way the self, world, void, and even God are all reconstituted by the mediating presence of Christ.¹⁴⁷ The Christian lives an ordinary life at the same time he/she is participating in a whole other reality.

The image that Loder uses most frequently for the Christian life is Kierkegaard's description of the knight of faith. In *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard offered a vision of a Christian who is so ordinary that he/she is almost invisible to the common eye. "The moment I set eyes on him I instantly push him from me, I myself leap backwards, I clasp my hands and say half aloud, 'Good Lord, is this the man? Is it really he? Why, he looks like a tax-collector!'" Even in church, the knight of faith in

¹⁴⁶Moltmann, p. 178. "In 'life in the Spirit' one even notices physically something of the 'life given to our mortal bodies'. We sense the exhilaration of existence and the élan of life in the Spirit. Spirituality is in a holistic sense new vitality. It is not a religious and moral restriction of life and its enfeebling reduction. It is a new delight in living in the joy of God. (p. 178)"

¹⁴⁷Cf. Thomas S. Kuhn's discussion of paradigm shifts in acts of discovery and creativity. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Second Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

indistinguishable. "No heavenly glance or any other token of the incommensurable betrays him; if one did not know him, it would be impossible to distinguish him from the rest of the congregation, for his healthy and vigorous hymn-singing proves at the most that he has good chest." Yet, this knight is so amazingly alive. "He takes delight in everything he sees, in the human swarm, in the new omnibuses, in the water of the Sound." The knight of faith is grounded in the particularity of love who takes immense delight in the goodness and beauty of creation without being determined by all that he sees and experiences. "He lives as carefree as a ne'er-do-well, and yet he buys up the acceptable time at the dearest price, for he does not do the least thing except by virtue of the absurd."¹⁴⁸

This was an important image for Loder, primarily because it captures an understanding of the human spirit fully alive in all its particularity.¹⁴⁹ The knight of faith, Loder affirms, "*lives* in the seacrossing theophany and so is engaged in the quiet passion of believing at every moment. Thus, he is fascinated that every particular is an embodiment of the universal, yet without losing its particularity; every event and interaction is a gift that is unique but embodies eternity; everything is truly possible not nothing is necessary – all 'by virtue of the absurd.'"¹⁵⁰

If the *telos* of conviction is a deepened engagement with the world, what is the further purpose of such an engagement? Loder seems to suggest that conviction yields primarily a sense of delight and fascination with being. But if this sense of particularity is an expression of love (as we saw earlier), then surely the power of transforming love would require a deeper engagement with social issues. If the Spirit thrusts the Christian more deeply into the world with love, then, it seems to me that the Christian life inevitably involves a critical engagement with culture, especially when the forces of culture (as in the power of socialization) are so destructive of the human spirit. Yet, for all of Loder's stress upon the power of God to transform the human spirit, there is a noticeable silence and glaring omission of any concern for social justice in his writings. Loder does believe that transformed persons have the power to shape the socio-cultural order, but he does not elaborate upon what that might look like other than to say that it will be koinonia-like. "Countering dualistic themes and atomistic objectivism, the relational reality of the koinonia attempts to live out in human forms the inner life of the trinitarian God. Indeed, insofar as it is true to itself, the relational life of persons in God's Spirit will always search out, be sustained by, and call forth from within its own depths and from beyond its boundaries, the communion-

¹⁴⁸Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, p.

¹⁴⁹He makes reference to the knight of faith in *NRC*, pp. 442ff; *RPCF*, pp. 145-146, 177-178; *TKM*, 104-105ff, and *LS*, pp. 334-336. Kierkegaard explains that the knight of faith, "... takes delight in everything, and whenever one sees him taking part in a particular pleasure, he does it with the persistence which is the mark of the earthly man whose soul is absorbed in such things. ... Yet he does not do the least thing except by virtue of the absurd [the God-man received in faith]." *Fear and Trembling*, Translated by Walter Lowrie (New York: Doubleday, 1954), pp. 49ff.

¹⁵⁰*LS*, p. 334.

creating presence of Jesus Christ."¹⁵¹ However, this is never completely articulated.¹⁵²

But it should come as no surprise that Loder is reluctant to convey such a vision. What must one do in response to the life given in Christ? The answer will be unique for every individual. What is more important is giving the human spirit the freedom to choose, as if God is saying back, "What do *you* want to do?" Loder wants to ensure freedom of the ego to choose based on self-worth - because the concern for self-worth will save the person from self-destruction.¹⁵³ This is why the ethical component of the Christian life always flows after a period of abiding or indwelling in the presence of Christ, chiefly in the form of prayer.

Because Loder wants to hold out the possibility of uniqueness and particularity, he also affirms that within the Christian experience there must inevitably be an openness to the future, an awareness of the possibility contained in every encounter. This guarantees uniqueness and particularity, but it also affirms the eschatological aspect of four-dimensional existence. While theories of development might have a place in the way we understand human growth, they have no power over the eschatological power of the Spirit that is continually at work in producing something new. Moments of transformation are inherently eschatological in nature, they are not simply naturally emerging experiences, but something that comes upon the individual. Here, Moltmann is helpful in his point that the Christian experience

¹⁵¹TKM, p. 306.

¹⁵²There is one exception. In *LS* (pp. 222-223) and in "The Great Sex Charade and the Loss of Intimacy," *Word and World*, XXI (2001): 81-87, Loder takes up the issue of homosexuality and the Christian experience. He does not see this as a social justice issue, but as primarily a psycho-spiritual "condition" connected to issues of intimacy. In *LS*, he places the origins of homosexuality during adolescence and sees it as arrested human development. This is a view that has been repudiated by many in both the church and in the psychoanalytic community. Loder goes so far to say, after working with a "changed" homosexual, that the homosexual lifestyle is a "love of death. (p. 222)" "...homosexuality is not ultimately fundamental to anyone's nature; it lives too close to death for that. The condition of homosexuality is, however, provocation to look deeper and discover that the real issue is not sexuality at all. It is intimacy." This is the theme that he further develops in "The Great Sex Charade." Loder's strong statements on this issue are unique for him and seem to be shaped by the destructive experiences of those he has counseled. In a conversation with Loder on this issue in November, 2000, I expressed my own views, which are diametrically opposed to his, and shared my frustration with the severity of his statements. He acknowledged that if he had the chance to re-write *LS*, he would modify that section, as his understanding of homosexuality and the Christian experience was still evolving. For alternative interpretations of homosexuality and Christian experience see: James Alison, *Faith Beyond Resentment: Fragments Catholic and Gay* (New York: Crossroad, 2001); Choon-Leong Seow, ed., *Homosexuality and the Christian Community* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1996); Eugene F. Rogers, Jr. *Sexuality and the Christian Body* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999); Rowan Williams, "Is There a Christian Sexual Ethic?" *A Ray of Darkness: Sermons and Reflections* (Cambridge, MA: Cowley, 1995); Walter Wink, ed., *Homosexuality and the Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999).

¹⁵³TTM2, p. 198.

consists of an encounter with God which yields something that is radically new - the *novum*, the new thing (Isaiah 43:18). One might easily think that the *novum* is an interruption, but "interruption is not an eschatological category." "The eschatological category is conversion," or what Loder would prefer to say is transformation.¹⁵⁴ Eschatological events bring about fundamental changes in the order of time and the structure of existence. "The prophets 'interrupt', but not just for a moment," Moltmann suggests, "they call the people to the conversion of the courses of time. Conversion and the rebirth to a new life change time and the experience of time."¹⁵⁵ Because such moments come from the future, in that they cannot be produced by the past, the Christian looks forward to the in-breaking of God's reign. "The future-made-present creates new conditions for possibilities in history. Mere interruption just disturbs; conversion creates new life."¹⁵⁶

In holding out the openness of the universe, Loder avows the possibility of new life which is the basis of Christian hope.¹⁵⁷ Resurrection, for example, does not evolve or emerge out of the past or present. It breaks in from the future. The resurrection not only converts the power of death, it says something about the structure of creation which tells us that resurrection and transformation are possible in the world. The conditions of the universe allow for such an occurrence. Just as there are proximate forms of death, as Loder suggests, so too are there proximate expressions of resurrection. While no one is beyond the grip of biological death, even it does not have the last word. The Spirit as the giver of life is renewing the face of the earth (Psalm 104:30), giving life, bestowing power, healing, and hope - all of which have their source in the life of the resurrected Christ who breaks in from the future. As a result, Moltmann strengthens Loder's point that the affirmation of the *novum* is the primary eschatological experience of the Spirit.¹⁵⁸ Resurrection itself points to the openness inherent to the Christian experience. "The raising of Christ from the dead has no analogies in experienced history, and is comparable only with the miracle of existence itself," notes Moltmann. This means that the future of the Christ, is the new creation. Moltmann puts it beautifully, "The new thing, the *καινός*, the *novum ultimum*, is the quintessence of the wholly other, marvelous thing that the eschatological future brings. With the raising

¹⁵⁴Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming God: Christian Eschatology*, trans. Margaret Köhl (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), p. 22. See also Richard Bauckham and Trevor Hart, *Hope Against Hope: Christian Eschatology at the Turn of the Millennium* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 199-200.

¹⁵⁵Moltmann, p. 22.

¹⁵⁶Moltman, p. 22.

¹⁵⁷"The future tense of the verb inhabits nearly every saying of Jesus. He is, for his followers, hope made flesh." George Steiner, *Grammars of Creation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 9.

¹⁵⁸Moltmann, p. 23.

of Christ from the dead, the future of the new creation sheds its lustre into the present of the old world, and in 'the sufferings of the present time' kindles hope for the world."¹⁵⁹ As such, the *novum ultimum* is completely beyond one's imagining at the level of the old creation. The work of the Spirit surprises, shocks, overwhelms, all of which is the prelude to transformation. This is because the in-breaking of God's New Creation bestows new interpretative framework. Yet, on the other hand, it is exactly the imagination that is required, but the imagination of one who is open to the mediating presence of the Spirit constructing a new reality that redemptively incorporates the void.¹⁶⁰

The place where the incorporation is experienced in the present, in the mundane ecstasy of four-dimensional life. While the new life is gift of the future, it is experienced in the particularity of the here and now. Colin Gunton has demonstrated that Christian theology's ambivalent understanding of history has led to an ambiguous apprehension of the value and reality of time.¹⁶¹ "The modern obsession with the future," as Gunton says, also prevents us from affirming the importance of the present. "The anxiety to bring the future about is the cause of the frantic rush that is one mark of the modern failure to live serenely in time." Thus, "the future" is a false abstraction because it "constrains life into false patterns of meaning."¹⁶² As the New Testament affirms and Loder attests, one's encounter with Jesus was an inbreaking of God's Kingdom, of the new Reality offered through God's grace. It is not the product of something that evolved or developed from the past but came upon them. Yet, the encounter was never anything less than something that was experienced in the present. Indeed, these experiences put them *into* space-time in new ways and reoriented their relationship with the world. The truth be told, we know little of the past and close to nothing of the future; what we have is the present, where we "live and move and have our being. (Acts 17:28)" Thus, agreeing with Gunton, "we require a reaffirmation of the centrality of the present for those whose createdness makes them creatures who know little of the past

¹⁵⁹Moltmann, p. 28.

¹⁶⁰TKM, pp. 240-264. When "the human spirit is awakened and empowered by the Creator Spirit, then human intensity is transformed into Christ's passion for the world, and human imagination becomes his vision for the world." "Normativity and Context in Practical Theology," p. 370.

¹⁶¹ Colin Gunton, *The One, The Three and the Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 74-100. Gunton sees part of the problem rooted in theologies of creation that, since Augustine, have not been able to affirm the temporality of time, that is, to see it as part of the created order and therefore good. This is a form of Gnosticism, Gunton notes, in that it is a denial "of the goodness and meaningfulness of the world of time." It "is encouraged by a theology that is pessimistic because it lacks christological and pneumatological determinants and thus divorces creation and redemption." Gunton, pp. 84-85. For example, "There is no realized eschatology for Augustine, or rather there is an eschatology realized only in the incarnation and at the end of time: accordingly, there is no anticipated eschatology. After the incarnation and before the end, all history is equally fallen." For Augustine, the incarnation was "a timeless presence inserted into time rather than a genuinely economic action. (p. 84)"

¹⁶²Gunton, p. 90.

and even less of the future.”¹⁶³ The present is the place where we live as creatures, fully dependent upon God. It is the place where we encounter Christ and live out our lives in relation to Him. It is the place where we experience life in all its fallenness, but also in all its fullness as mediated by the Spirit, the “Life-giver.” The present is the place of freedom, the vast, broad, place where there is no cramping, where we grow after the likeness of Christ, where we grow *into* our humanity. As Gunton recognizes, “it is the present that must be understood as that which, through Christ and the Spirit, is given from the past and redirected to its true end by the one God, creator and redeemer.”¹⁶⁴

VI. Transforming the Witness of the Church

Loder’s convictional theology thus speaks a powerful and timely word to the church. A word that is desperately needed at the beginning of a new millennium. As we have seen throughout, Loder’s writings make a significant contribution to the field of practical theology, primarily in the area of interdisciplinary study. But his insights and vision need to be taken out from the realm of the academy and translated for the parish, given to theologians writing for the church and clergy who are at odds to offer a compelling vision of the Christian life. Congregations and their pastors are weary and despondent. Most Protestant churches are engaged in status quo, maintenance-level ministry, just trying to preserve and hold the institution together a little longer. In this defensive mode, the church does not have the resources, especially the energy and imagination to be open to new ways of being the church and speaking to the culture.

If we bring Loder’s convictional theology to bear upon the present state of the church, we might come to see that perhaps the crisis we now face is rooted in the fact that a considerable amount of ministry is focused upon the preservation of the church, primarily viewed as an institution (worrying incessantly about numbers, statistics, and growth) and less about ministering to the needs of the human spirit. So much energy is being exerted to “save the church” that the people in the pews (if they are still in the pews) are perishing. Parishioners are often “used” for the sake of running the institution, paying the bills, keeping the operation going. But ministry and the Christian life are more than just socialization, which ensures the furtherance the institution. The Christian life, Loder reminds us, is about conviction, it is about transformation, it is about holding “the concrete claim that Christianity makes for human society [which] is the ability to change human life.”¹⁶⁵

In my estimation, contained within his relational phenomenological pneumatology is a vital dynamism that has the potential to provide new frameworks for the Christian life. To be a Christian

¹⁶³Gunton, p. 93.

¹⁶⁴Gunton, p. 94.

¹⁶⁵*RPCF*, pp. 20-21.

means to be continually open to the movement of the Holy Spirit who longs to bring the human spirit to life in a Christomorphic pattern. There is movement. It is kinetic. The Holy Spirit is active and present in the world, encountering individuals, producing change. Blowing through the lives of individuals and making real the presence of Christ. In this way the Holy Spirit is extending the work of Jesus Christ and inviting people to get caught up in what the Spirit is trying to do and realize through real, flesh and blood human beings. To be thrust into the world also means a radical openness to the *World* that God is giving, open to the *World* that the Spirit is creating and giving to the one in Christ. Instead of making the evangelical appeal of inviting Christ *into* one's life, Loder leads us to see that the Spirit is engaging the human spirit so that the human spirit can get *caught up in* the wider, ongoing, transforming work of Jesus Christ, caught up in *his* World. Loder's theology challenges theologians, clergy, and the ordinary layperson (and even non-believer) to expect and eagerly look for the Holy Spirit at work in the world, moving over the chaos of the world and bringing the power of the resurrection to those enslaved to the power of death. Because the "Spiritual Presence of God in Jesus Christ [is] at work to restore an anguished creation to its Creator," as Loder put it, we must affirm that the Spirit of Christ is moving through people's lives - whether they know it or not.

As such, I see a radical and even subversive element within Loder's thought.¹⁶⁶ It is edgy and uncomfortable with present ecclesiastical restrictions which appear to hinder the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is not in service to the church, but in service to the Word who through the Spirit is continuing the work of the incarnation by enfleshing human life with the Spirit of God. This view has far-reaching implications for the church and the world. The Spirit has no respect for the past or for traditions *per se*, no respect for the institution, but only for the redemption of human lives and how redeemed lives live within the *koinonia*.¹⁶⁷ As the *Creator Spiritus* the Spirit is the Provoker and Conflictor, stirring up human life and exposing the self-destructive patterns of the human spirit. The Spirit is moving and the

¹⁶⁶This tone is especially noticeable in his early work with its counter-cultural emphases. Even though Loder has identified himself in the last decade with some of the more conservative elements in the Presbyterian Church. This is particularly true with regards to the subject of homosexuality and his co-authorship of a letter denouncing that actions of feminist and womanist theologians at the "Ecumenical Decade: Churches in Solidarity with Women, 1988-1998" conference in Minneapolis, MN, 1993. See "An Open Letter to Presbyterians: Theological Analysis of Issues Raised by the Re-Imaging Conference," written with other Princeton faculty: Diogenes Allen, Charles Bartow, Ulrich Mauser, Bruce McCormack and David Willis-Watkins. I find it difficult to square Loder's outlook with what I have come to see in his pneumatology - which is anything but conservative.

¹⁶⁷"The Christian tradition is by no means inevitably traditionalist. Its eschatological hope and its missionary orientation press is towards constantly changing contextualizations of the Gospel, in which the resources of the past are brought into critical relationship with the present with a view to the future," in which the Christian remains "*subject* to the apostolic accounts of its fundamental meaning." Richard Bauckham, "Tradition in Relation to Scripture and Reason," in Richard Bauckham and B. Drewery, eds. *Tradition in Relation to Scripture and Reason: A Study in the Criteria of Christian Doctrine* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), p. 128.

Christian life must be equally mobile, traveling light, open to the freedom of the Spirit that is making us free (Galatians 5:1). When members of the church view the Christian life in this way the entire structure and mission of the church will change. Trusting in the movement of the Holy Spirit thus frees the church to be as revolutionary and as radical as the Gospel message itself.¹⁶⁸ To live in this way liberates the church to be creative and not tied to the past. The challenges facing the church are immense. The old ways of doing ministry must yield to different, new ways. There is no clear consensus how the church laden with the institutional burdens of its collective past and its tradition can be "light" enough to move with what Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) called the "burden of history."¹⁶⁹ The church must break from the "inertia of history" and be present to the present time. Released to be authentically present, kinetically moving through space-time under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the church will then be free to be present to the age and thus free to speak a creative word of healing in such a way that is contextual, that is meaningful to the age.

In order for the church to speak to the present age it must be free to be creative and imaginative. There is no one more creative and imaginative than the Holy Spirit who is continually creating and recreating the world and our lives from within the generative power of God's redeeming love. The church can then begin to move, free to go where the Spirit leads. New patterns, new paradigms are needed for thinking about ministry and communicating the message of the Gospel. C. Jeff Woods calls the church to action. He writes:

The church is changing. The change is significant enough to be termed a crisis. The word crisis stems from a Latin root which mean 'to part' or 'to separate.' The church is currently faced with parting from the old ways of doing things. The church must orient itself toward the future. The word orient originally meant the direction of the rising sun. Many believe that the sun is setting on the church. Rather, it may be that the church has been in a period of darkness, and a totally new sun is just about to emerge upon the horizon. To follow that sun, the church must venture out.¹⁷⁰

In order for this to happen, we have to unload the burden of the past. We need to turn our faces away from the past, assured of what has been, and turn our faces toward the needs of the present church, open toward the future.

Loder's framework allows us to engage in what Peter M. Senge recently identified as "generative

¹⁶⁸When Christianity "remains true to the Incarnation, it can be revolutionary. . . ." Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Nonsense*, p. 177.

¹⁶⁹Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Uses and Abuses of History (1874)," in *Thoughts Out of Season*, Part II. trans. Adrian Collins (New York: Russell & Russell, 1965).

¹⁷⁰C. Jeff Woods, *Congregational Megatrends*, p. 27.

learning."¹⁷¹ Senge studies the pattern of behavior in learning organizations, focusing primarily on businesses, but some of the patterns can be applied to the church. In an organization "that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future," there are often two types of learning: survival/adaptive and generative. The survival/adaptive reflects a two-dimensional pattern. Being generative is four-dimensional. For a learning organization it is not enough merely to survive. This is important, but it must be combined with the capacity to be generative, providing new ways of being, moving, acting that fosters creativity and growth. The church as a learning organization, I would argue, has spent far too much time in the survival mode. This would be equivalent to Loder's understanding of socialization as pattern maintenance. In contrast, to be in a four-dimensional, generative mode, people are conscious of the degree to which they create their reality and to what extent reality is malleable. It is significant that the word Senge uses to make this shift from adaptive to generative learning is the Greek word with obvious Christian overtones: *metanoia*. Learning requires a fundamental shift or movement of mind.¹⁷² It is not acting or learning as before. Theologically, it is a change of mind, but a change that comes upon one from beyond or above one's mind, not internal to the self.

It is further significant to note that Senge has found that the primary cause for adaptive/survival strategies, and thus that which hinders an organization from being generative and creative in the present, is what he calls "the fixation on events." Although he does not identify it, this fixation on events can be viewed as an expression of the historical sense infiltrating all areas of our life and commerce. We continually compare two events on a time-line and trace their pattern, change or development over time. This configuration of time results in events taking on a life of their own, distorting reality and preventing us from moving creatively into the future. For example:

Conversations in organizations are dominated by concern with events: last month's sales, the new budget cuts, last quarter's earnings, who just got promoted or fired, the new product our competitors just announced, the delay that just was announced on our new product, and so on. The media reinforces an emphasis on short-term events- after all, if it's more than two days' old it's no longer "news." Focusing on events leads to "event" explanations: "The Dow Jones average dropped sixteen points today," announces the newspaper, "because low fourth-quarter profits were announced yesterday." Such explanations may be true as far as they go, but they distract us from seeing the longer-term patterns of change that lie behind the events and from understanding the causes of those patterns.

Our fixation on events is actually part of our evolutionary programming. If you wanted to design a cave person for survival, ability to contemplate the cosmos would not be a high-ranking design criterion. What is important is the ability to see the saber-toothed tiger over your left shoulder and react quickly. The irony is that, *today, the primary threats to our survival, both of our organizations and of our societies, come not from sudden events but from slow, gradual processes*; the arms race, environmental decay,

¹⁷¹Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of The Learning Organization* (New York: Currency/Doubleday, 1990), p. 22.

¹⁷²Senge, pp. 12-13.

the erosion of a society's public education system, increasingly physical capital, and decline in design or product quality (at least relative to competitors' quality) are all slow, gradual processes.

Generative learning cannot be sustained in an organization if people's thinking is dominated by short-term events. If we focus on events, the best we can ever do is predict an event before it happens so that we can react optimally. But we cannot learn to create.¹⁷³

Similarly, the slow decline of the church in the West could be seen as a further expression of survival/adaptive strategies because of our fixation on events, such as seeing the life of Christ as merely an historical event of the past. Loder's theology tells the church that it has the capacity to experience the very *metanoia* it proclaims and offers to people, to participate in what H. Richard Niebuhr called "the permanent revolution of heart and mind."¹⁷⁴ This can only be accomplished through the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. The principal way generative learning takes place, as the New Testament confirms, is by "direct experience."¹⁷⁵ In order for us to have that "direct experience" of Christ, we need to re-conceptualize the way we think about time and reaffirm the possibility and reality that the Holy Spirit moves across the vast, broad, "gaps" of time and distance to mediate the presence of Christ.

Thus, Loder's pneumatology provides a framework for us to take seriously the claim that when we talk about Jesus we are not referring to merely an historical event that occurred at some point in the past, but a personal presence we somehow encounter and experience today. It is this ongoing relationship with Christ that constitutes the Christian life. H. Richard Niebuhr (1894-1962) captures this idea when he said, "Jesus Christ is not an object, but a person. He is trusted, receives loyalty (commitment)." He is "not the object of our teaching, not the object of our common knowledge but he acknowledged companion."¹⁷⁶ This is what Loder is trying to uphold - Jesus as companion.

Loder's theology speaks to the needs of believers and the religious seekers who are looking for an experience of the Holy. Second-order knowing (through texts, traditions, narratives, or stories) are

¹⁷³Senge, pp. 21-22. Emphasis in text.

¹⁷⁴H. Richard Niebuhr, *Theology, History, and Culture: Major Unpublished Writings*, Edited by William Stacy Johnson; Foreword by Richard R. Niebuhr (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), p. xvii.

¹⁷⁵Senge, p. 23. G. B. Caird, *New Testament Theology*, Completed and Edited by L. D. Hurst (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 347-348.

¹⁷⁶Richard R. Niebuhr, ed. *Faith on Earth: An Inquiry into the Structure of Human Faith by H. Richard Niebuhr* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 88. "The Christ of our life in faith is not simply the historic individual Jesus, though he is that too, but he is the inner personal companion who as person is present in the memory and expectation of the believer. He is acknowledged as person. Christ is the personal companion who has been engrafted into my personal existence so that I cannot and do not live except in this companionship. I am untrue to him, I deny him, but he does not let me go and I cannot let him go.(p. 105)"

not sufficient to bring about the kind of change given in first-order knowing. This is the same point recently raised by George Steiner in *Real Presences*. Steiner redefines the meaning of hermeneutics beyond a "signifying [of] . . . systematic methods and practices of explication, of the interpretation of texts." Instead, he wants us to see that hermeneutics is "the enactment of answerable understanding, of active apprehension."¹⁷⁷ He is critical of the "secondary," of studies, commentaries, histories, accounts after the fact, which devalue and weaken that which is gained through immediate experiences. The hermeneutical strategy of the secondary distances us from the power of the original experience, the real presence, and even, Steiner suggests, has the power to remove us from an experience of transcendence, including God. He contends "that the wage on the meaning of meaning, on the potential of insight and response when one human voice addresses another, when we come face to face with the text and work or art or music, which is to say when we encounter the other in its condition of freedom, is a wager on transcendence."¹⁷⁸ He calls for a renewed reliance upon the primary because the methodologies of criticism, including biblical criticism and historical criticism, have not offered generative, life-giving experiences. They have only yielded a false-immediacy that bears with it the "pulse of the distant source."¹⁷⁹

Steiner's call for an immediate experience parallels exactly what Loder's theology provides for the church. People are searching for immediate experiences, direct personal encounters, real presences that mediate the power of God.¹⁸⁰ For both church members and the religious seeker alike, through the proclamation of the Gospel in worship, sacraments, prayer and service we have an obligation to point to the active presence of Christ in the world. We must be conscious of whether or not our ministry seeks to bring people into relationship with God, creating a context for encounter, instead of merely offering second-hand knowledge about God. In this sense, Steiner has a better handle on the desires of the human heart than does the church. We need to pay attention to these imperatives for he, too, describes the problems associated with two-dimensionality. "We crave remission from direct encounter with the 'real presence' or the 'real absence of that presence'," declares Steiner, "the two phenomenologies being rigorously inseparable, which an answerable experience of the aesthetic must enforce on us. We seek

¹⁷⁷George Steiner, *Real Presences: Is there anything in what we say?* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989), p. 7.

¹⁷⁸Steiner, p. 4.

¹⁷⁹Steiner, p. 28.

¹⁸⁰Cf. Johan Goethe's statement, "I hate everything that merely instructs me without increasing or directly quickening my activity." Cited in Nietzsche, *Thoughts Out of Season*, p. 3. This idea becomes the basis for his essay on the "worth and worthlessness of history. I will show in them why instruction that does not 'quicken,' knowledge that slackens the reign of activity, why in fact history, in Goethe's phrase, must be seriously 'hated,' as a costly and superfluous luxury of the understanding. . . . (p.3)"

the immunities of indirection."¹⁸¹ For book reviews, literary criticism, even histories have only distanced us from the immediate, original experiences, so that "the infernal machine of questioning vision," where "mystery is defused by intermittence."¹⁸²

Christian faith is, therefore, not a blind trust in a unique historical character, nor merely believing a story about one who claimed to be the Son of God, as if that is enough to yield ontological change. Christian faith is birthed in the primal experience when a man, woman, or child, encounters the person of the Risen Christ here and now. In those moments one's mind is changed as the Holy Spirit blazes new paths through the neuronal structure of the brain, causing everything to change within and without. A new reality is offered that allows one to think, feel, and act in a new way. One is never the same again. Something radically new has taken place. One is coming to life. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is still the best news offered to a world locked in continual crisis and subject to decay and ultimately death. The power of the Gospel to bring about transformation is a present reality and possibility in this world. The church has the ability to hold out to the world the possibility of transformation, but we cannot offer that which we do not believe and which we have never experienced. We cannot offer what we do not have.¹⁸³ Unless the church in the West rediscovers this power by opening itself up to the power of the Holy Spirit, we will remain ineffective.

The power of the Spirit is known in the relationship. Not only is Loder's theology inherently personal, it is constitutively relational. In the dialectic of Spirit-to-spirit, Person-to-person, Freedom-to-freedom we encounter the presence of Christ. Relationality runs through every level of the created order and has been revealed as the driving force of the Trinity. Loder believed:

[The] ultimacy of relationality resides . . . in the trinitarian nature of the one God who is revealed to us in Jesus Christ. The unity of God's nature as the Cappadocian theologians (4th c) understood so well is the relationality among the three persons of the trinity; the dynamic inner life of God is the relationality among its members, each one of which contains the whole. To understand that Jesus Christ is fully God as well as fully human is to understand that the perichoretic unity among the members of the trinity whereby continual and mutual interpenetration without loss of identity (notably a dynamic that also appears among particles at the subatomic level) is already revealed

¹⁸¹Steiner, p. 39.

¹⁸²Steiner, p. 28.

¹⁸³Loder makes this point in one of his chapel talks at Princeton Seminary. Speaking to the seminarians he asked, "Do you really believe what you are learning? Is what you believe connecting with the knowledge we pass on to you? If not, then you make us your oppressors. Moreover, if we ignore you and insist on our integration of your learning, we are in a war against your freedom to let [Christ's] life in and among you give the shape to the material we all deem precious. . . . [W]hen our convictional relation to *Christ* - seen as a growing thing - ceases to be the criterion for educational excellence in a theological setting, we will be missing the point, giving way to a sterile academia, or a plastic professionalism that will surely betray the cause." "The Corrective: An Educational Mandate," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 68 (1976): 77-79. Italics in the text.

in him. To understand this is to understand that the fundamental work of the Holy Spirit of God is to create among his people a *koinonia* relationality that replicates in creation the inner life of God and thereby reveals the communal unity between the Divine and the human we first saw in him. This will be a restoration of the image of God and the purpose which God is working out in God's time in, through and beyond the history of the universe.¹⁸⁴

By stressing the importance of the relational, Loder has given an inestimable gift to the church. What makes the Christian life meaningful is the deepening of one's relationship with God in Christ and strengthening one's relationships with all people, especially in the community of the church. It is a community that is gathered together not to simply preserve itself, but to enter together into the intimacy of the Spirit thereby deepening intimacy with other human beings. This is why Loder claimed, "Relationality is ontologically prior to rationality."¹⁸⁵

VII. The Christian Life as the Transfiguring Love of the Creator Spirit

It is important to note that no one lives in a constant four-dimensional existence. We move in and out of the dimensions quite freely. God's intention is that we live four-dimensionally, a life that is configured by Holy mediating reality. The work of the Holy Spirit is ongoing. Transformation is ongoing. And along the way transformation produces moments of transfiguration, the experience of being placed more fully into the world and being led into the truth of the Spirit. Transfiguration plays a central role in Loder's phenomenology because through it we experience the life-changing love of the Creator Spirit.

Our theological consideration takes its cue from the biblical reference to Jesus' mountain top experience, most fully recorded in Matthew 17:1–8 (with parallel references in Mark 9:2–8 and Luke 9:28–36.) Six days after Peter's confession to Jesus that, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," in Caesarea Philippi, Jesus brings Peter, James and John up a mountain (Matthew 16:16). Situated at the half-way point in Matthew's gospel between Jesus' baptism and his resurrection, the story of Jesus'

¹⁸⁴James E. Loder, "The Place of Science in Practical Theology: The Human Factor," *International Journal of Practical Theology*, 4 (2000), p. 40. "This priority of relationality over rationality, in both developmental sequence and quality of being, is deeply embedded in human experience. This make is possible for us to envision and take seriously the probability that, viewed through the window of 'quantum weirdness,' the whole universe is everywhere and in all its aspects deeply interconnected." *LS*, p. 8.

¹⁸⁵George Macleod (1895–1991) beautifully captures Loder's sentiment, "For Christ is a Person to be trusted, not a principle to be tested. The Church is a Movement, not a meeting house. The Faith is an Experience, not an exposition. Christians are Explorers, not map makers. And the New Social Order [the Kingdom] is not a blueprint which someone must find quickly. It is a present Experience made possible at Bethlehem, offered on Calvary, and communicated at Pentecost." George Macleod, *Coracle* (1942) cited in Ronald Ferguson, *George Macleod: Founder of the Iona Community* (London: HarperCollins, 1990), p. 195.

transfiguration is certainly one of the more obscure and mysterious stories found in the gospel. Compared to other moments in Jesus' life, such as his birth, crucifixion, or resurrection, the transfiguration is often overlooked.¹⁸⁶ This is unfortunate, because in this story we are given an invaluable clue here as to the pattern in which God, through Jesus Christ, *continually illumines reality for us, and drives us deeper into the nature of Reality itself*.¹⁸⁷

The three disciples ascend the mountain holding one conception of Jesus and they descend with another. The change in perspective is brought about as a result of literally *seeing* Jesus in a new light, so to speak, and by *hearing* a word about him that did not originate within them. They have what Loder would identify as a four-dimensional, convictional experience - a knowing event. Up until this point in Matthew's text, the disciples have a very difficult time understanding Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom or Realm of God. They do not fully grasp the radical significance of the message or the unique identity of the preacher, Jesus. In Caesarea Philippi, even though Jesus affirms Peter's confession he is quick to scold him, accusing him of being an agent of Satan, because he objects to Jesus' statement that he "must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised (Matthew 17:21-22)." The disciples, particularly Peter, seem to have Jesus *figured out*. They cast him in a certain image, project particular ideas upon him, impose their own subjectivities, hopes, fears, and agendas and then seek to relate to him from out of those projections, within the confines of their limited knowledge. They soon realize the limit of their knowledge, however, when their frames of meaning are disclosed for what they are and are then shattered by the revelation of God's light shining through Jesus.

The text says that Jesus was "transfigured before them and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light (Matthew 17:2)." In addition to seeing Jesus' radiating garments and face, Moses and Elijah appear to talk with Jesus. From a close reading of the text it is clear that Peter, in particular, is so overwhelmed by what he sees before him that he does not know what to say. His proposal to erect three booths or tents of meeting for these visitors is the suggestion of one so overcome by the trauma of the experience that what he offers is nonsensical gibberish. Note that in verse five Peter

¹⁸⁶Many church goers are not familiar with this story. Even though it is recognized and sometimes celebrated during the liturgical year on the Sunday before the beginning of Lent (or on 6th August in some calendars), for all intents and purposes it is ignored by the church.

¹⁸⁷Thomas G. Long identifies this text as apocalyptic. The purpose of apocalyptic literature, he writes, "is to pull back the curtain, to lift the veil, so that what is normally hidden - the action of God, the hidden ways of heaven - can be seen. . . . Since God's activity is hidden from normal sight, apocalyptic texts seek to provide extraordinary vision by pulling back the heavenly shroud to reveal, if only for an instant, the incognito activity of God, woven undetected into the fabric of human history and disguised in the ordinariness of life." *Matthew* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), pp. 192-193. See also W. F. Albright & C. S. Mann, *The Anchor Bible: Matthew*, With Introduction, Translation, and Notes (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1986), pp. 203-207; William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958), pp. 172-179.

is still speaking when "a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him (v.5)." As soon as the disciples heard the voice from the cloud, "they fell on their faces, and were filled with fear (v.6)." This experience is a jolt, a death blow to their preconceived understandings of Jesus. In fear, they turn their faces from Jesus' radiating face, turning away from the divine light that is pouring through Jesus before them. Jesus, seeing their fear, refuses to allow their dread to have the last word and speaks into their terror with a word of grace, "Rise, and have no fear." "And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only (vs. 7-8)."

If they once regarded Jesus from a strictly human point of view, they could do so no longer (Cf. 2 Corinthians 5:16). When the three descended from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of man is raised from the dead (v.9)." The implication here is that while the vision gives a glimpse into Jesus' true nature, as well as an eschatological unveiling of the way they would come to see him, they did not have the conceptual framework to apprehend the significance of what they just witnessed until after the resurrection. It appears that they received a proleptic participation in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ that was established in his resurrection - of God's triumph over death and fear. They had been given an insight who Jesus really was, but the full meaning of what they experienced would not be made clear until a later point when they were ready to grasp it.

What became clear to them is that their predetermined *figurations*, their *pre-figured* conceptions of Jesus were themselves *trans-figured* when Jesus disclosed his true identity. The Greek here is *transmorphe*, to change form or appearance. It could also be translated, "transformed." To put it this way would suggest that Jesus, "morphed," that is changed shape, mutating from one form of being to another. It is true that Jesus' appearance did change - his clothes became white as light and his face shone like the sun. But the suggestive theological point in this account is that while Jesus' physical qualities (his size, weight, and facial features) did not change in form but stayed the same, because they still recognized him, his human (fully human) nature remained intact, at the same time his identification as "Son" was disclosed to them in the form of light and confirmed by the voice, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Due to this unveiling, the disciples' frame of reference was forever transformed. Their future conceptions and ideations of who and what Jesus was toward them would have to be continually *re-figured* in light of the *trans-figuration* of the knowledge that Jesus provided for them. Jesus did not become something new as a result of that luminous display. He opened up for them the deeper dimensions of his reality that had been with them all along, but they did not recognize it. The limits of their knowing would allow them to see only the Jesus of history. Jesus' true nature would have to be given or revealed to them. Thomas Long interestingly notes that, "Historically speaking, Jesus is on a death march, entering the gloomiest season of his life." When the light of God shines through Jesus, everything changes. "The earthly Jesus is headed toward his doom on the cross, but suddenly we see not a victim, but a victor; not the one despised and rejected by the world, but the one beloved and well

pleasing to God."¹⁸⁸ Their own blindness and darkness hindered them from seeing his true identity until the light cast from the light of God enabled them to truly see him. He showed them who he really was and in the light of that knowledge their reality, itself, was transfigured. In God's light we see light (Psalm 36:9).¹⁸⁹ The transfiguration is not merely a cognitive, rational experience but occurs within the context of a relationship, person to person, grounded in a personal encounter with Christ and through Christ to God.¹⁹⁰ One level of knowing is transfigured by another, offering a figure-ground gestalt reversal, and giving greater meaning and depth.

Light, therefore, is an indispensable component in the process of transfiguration. The light unveils what before was beyond the possibility of sight and meaning. In that moment with Christ, reality will be cast in a new light. "As the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day.(Luke 17:24)" In terms of what happened to the disciples, it is as if the apparent death march of Jesus' history is illuminated by the light of God which recasts the meaning and purpose of that march for the disciples; the death march is at the same time a life march. So, too, the light of God can be seen as continually pouring through Christ, a light that is cast over the death march of human history *who* thereby continues to transfigure reality for everyone who encounters him. It is through light, specifically God's light and the constant of light in the universe that reality is formed and secured.

As we saw in the previous chapter, Thomas F. Torrance has developed a theology of light informed by his interdisciplinary study of theology and physics. In the shift from the mechanistic, Newtonian world to the relational, Einsteinian world, the most important discovery has been "the central and unifying role of light across the whole spectrum of scientific knowledge."¹⁹¹ The created light of the universe is contingent upon the uncreated Light, which is God. For, "God is light. (1 John 1:5)" It

¹⁸⁸Long, p. 193.

¹⁸⁹Compare Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945), *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Collier Books, (1963), "The call of Jesus teaches us that our relation to the world has been built on an illusion. . . . For the Christian the only God-given realities are those he receives from Christ. What is not given us through the incarnate Son is not given us by God .(pp. 108-109)"

¹⁹⁰The revelation of God in Jesus Christ, writes Brunner, "means that God no longer speaks *out* of us, but *to* us; we do not know him as being *in* the world, and therefore do not know him *through* the world, but we know him as the One who comes into the world. For he himself is an other than the world, an other than the content of the soul. He is the *Other One*, the mysterious and unknowable One, who has his own proper name and whom we do not know because he is *person*. Personality is a secret; a mystery is hidden in it. Knowledge of a person is possible only through revelation, and he reveals himself through his word. Through the word the mystery of the person is communicated. So God reveals himself in the world because he is spirit, the only true personal spirit." *The Theology of Crisis* (New York: Charles Scribner's Son, 1929), p. 32.

¹⁹¹Thomas F. Torrance, *Christian Theology and Scientific Culture* (Belfast: Christian Journals Limited, 1980), p. 75.

is the “uncreated Light” of God that “constitutes the ultimate ground of its intelligibility [of created light] and as such establishes it and gives it its true value. Apart from such a basis in uncreated Light all our experience and knowledge of things in the universe would finally be meaningless, for they would be devoid of any ultimate standards of truth, goodness, or beauty.”¹⁹² The Light of God is the ground for all that is illuminated by the light of creation, the light that illumines all areas of knowledge in the universe. This same Jesus as Light of the World continues to extend his “life-giving light” through the Holy Spirit participating in his perichoretic relationship with the Son and the Father. Like light itself, the Spirit is infinitely swift, moving kinetically, not bound by time or space, and therefore free to be present in any age or place, mediating the presence of Christ and illuminating Reality because he is the Spirit of truth.

The Christian experience is ultimately defined by transfiguration, whereby reality continually is illuminated by the light of God through Jesus Christ. The encounter not only suggests ways in which God can reveal divine knowledge, it also says something about the very structure of the created order and the way we come to an apprehension of what is real, what is *Reality*, through the ongoing mediation of Christ.¹⁹³ The “exemplary” vision, as Loder sees it, offered in Matthew 17 serves as a paradigm through which we see the way human reality is constructed by the Spirit of Christ. This is Loder’s interpretation of the text, a reading that further reinforces the radicalization of spatio-temporal reality which we discussed in the last chapter:

It is not simply the visage of Jesus, but the ordinary light of day that is transformed in juxtaposition with an epiphany of God’s uncreated light. This uncreated light is radiant, bright and glorious in splendor, enough to shake Peter and his companions from their slumber. This light so relativises space and time that Moses and Elijah appear and are talking with Jesus. Perhaps as if to regain ground for culture, Peter suggests building traditional booths to hold the epiphany. But cultural appropriations are inadequate to contain the light of God and the voice of God that speaks from the cloud. In the uncreated light of God, we can be freed from barriers constructed by culture, and even from so-called natural limitations. In this way, Christian experience can perceive and indwell what is beyond our natural eyes.¹⁹⁴

Loder thus defines transfiguration as “the illumination and divination of an otherwise

¹⁹²Torrance, p. 78.

¹⁹³See Thomas F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers & Howard, 1992), p. 9. “...as the incarnate Word and Truth of God Jesus Christ in his own personal Being is identical with the Revelation which he mediates. But he is at the same time the very Way in which it is to be apprehended and interpreted and the very Life which is the light of men, for it is only through the assimilation of our minds to the Mind of God incarnate in Christ that we are given the modes of discernment, forms of thought, and the structures of the understanding which we need in order to grasp and articulate knowledge of God in a way that is worthy of him. (p. 9)”

¹⁹⁴James E. Loder, “A Meditation on Evangelism in a Scientific Culture,” *The Princeton Theological Review*, VIII (2001): 9.

unenlightened or mundane phenomenon. The implication is that the phenomenon as transfigured is the fundamental reality; the darkened version is its common appearance."¹⁹⁵ This certainly captures what Matthew describes. Jesus' common appearance returned, but the illumination revealed his fundamental reality. This is not to say that Jesus' true reality was light, apart from his human appearance. This would lend itself to a docetic view. The fundamental reality is Jesus' humanity and his divinity. Loder wants us to see a pattern of transfiguration that, defined by Christ and mediated by his Spirit, yields the ontological transformation of persons and their ideas, and by extension of our personal grasp of the structure of reality.

It is within this context that Loder discusses evangelism (and the only place where he does so) as the activity of "opening human eyes to the ultimate light that defines all lesser lights in eternal and eschatological perspective."¹⁹⁶ It is the work of bringing people to the Light, which is Jesus Christ, so that they can "see" what God has done and is doing in the world. Evangelism cannot be "reduced to technology – a technique-driven approach to evangelism is reductionistic of human destiny and portrays God as a fool trying to save the world by gimmickry."¹⁹⁷ Even here, Loder's personalism and relationalism are brought to bear upon the way the Christian reaches out to the world with the good news that is the Gospel. The Gospel is not an idea that simply has to be believed, nor is it a call to strive after some moral idea. The Gospel is truly good news because in it we discover who we really are in the mind of God. "The true evangelist dwells day and night in the ultimate paradigm shift where ordinary reality is decisively redefined by the living presence of Jesus Christ. Then, and only then, can he or she discern what the Spirit or Christ is doing and so enter into doing 'the good works, which God prepare beforehand to be our way of life'. (Ephesians 2:10)"¹⁹⁸ Loder extends a powerful vision of what is possible for human life when he/she realizes that one is *already* participating in the vast, broad, extravagant love of God in Christ, "when we apprehend that all creation, including humans, is already comprehended in the mind of God. . . ." This experience and acknowledgment must be seen as a significant part of the good news of the Gospel because "this insight makes intelligible our place in the universe and our drive to comprehend ourselves."¹⁹⁹

We end, therefore, by stressing that for Loder the *telos* of transfiguration is love. Even though

¹⁹⁵TTM2, p. 43. In contrast to transformation, "which as a process (though not in its outcome) may be largely invisible, transfiguration is a visible change of essential form (*morphe*)." (p. 229, cited in G. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Volume IV*).

¹⁹⁶Loder, "A Meditation on Evangelism in a Scientific Culture," p. 12.

¹⁹⁷Loder, p. 12.

¹⁹⁸Loder, p. 12.

¹⁹⁹Loder, p. 12.

conviction begins in conflict and results in ongoing conflictual experiences for the human spirit, the movement of the Spirit is directed by the power of God's love for humanity and the world, a love that is poured out into a human life through whom the world is being blessed. Loder was fond of quoting a line from Kierkegaard's monumental text, *Works of Love*: "Love believes all things – and yet is never deceived." Kierkegaard is talking about divine love which has the power to transform human love from illusion to truth. Such a love, Loder writes, "has the power to expose deception as a delusion about reality. Human integrity based on the love revealed in Christ will not finally be deceived, but will deceive deception into the truth."²⁰⁰ Because the Spirit is bringing one into all truth (John 16:13), the Christian comes to have "full awareness of all that is going on, including the deceptions perpetrated against [love], but as love, it exposes, as in a harsh white light, that deception is in fact an exercise in nihilism, so it comes to nothing."²⁰¹ This is why conviction begins in conflict because the Spirit exposes the deceptions, seductions, and lies of the ego that is bent on self-destruction and isolation.²⁰² The Spirit is the Truth Teller. It is as if Jesus is saying through the Spirit, "*You think you know how to live, you think you know what matters in life, but you don't. And you won't know until you die to your illusions and live in my truth, otherwise you'll live in your illusions and die in your lies.*" It is said that "The truth hurts." It does not have to, but sometimes it does. Maybe the truth has to hurt, has to pierce our lives in order to break us free from our self-contained worlds. From the cross we see the pain caused by telling the truth, as Jesus was murdered for telling the truth about ourselves, the world and about God. Yet, that truth because it is God's truth, has the potential of being redemptive, of bringing life out of death, whereas lies can only distort, destroy, and ultimately kill.

Loder's contribution to our understanding of the Christian life rests in his insight that the Holy Spirit wants to expose the lies we live in and under in order to put us more deeply and truthfully into the world. The work of the Spirit transfigures reality and opens us up to the truth of the Gospel and with it

²⁰⁰James E. Loder and W. Jim Neidhardt, "Barth, Bohr, and Dialectic," in W. Mark Richardson & Wesley J. Wildman, *Religion and Science: History, Method, and Dialogue* (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 287.

²⁰¹*LS*, p. 276. Cf. Willie James Jennings, "Holy Spirit and Human Spirit: Overcoming a Deceived Heart," *Fire and Wind: The Holy Spirit in the Church Today*, pp. 89ff. Jennings argues that the Holy Spirit seeks to free the human spirit from self-deceptions, primarily caused when the self looks to define itself through the prison of interiority (which is rooted in the Freudian thought). Even though the Holy Spirit might be "in us," the Spirit is always 'outside of us,' before us, yet always at work on us." Despite the title of the essay, Jennings fails to articulate the relationality of the Holy Spirit to the human spirit.

²⁰²"*Isolation* is the development term used to describe self-deceit at the ego level, but isolation is more profound when it is alienation from the spiritual truth about oneself. It is well known that there is a close connection between personal isolation and the human propensity to violence. The hidden life of Judas is the prime example. Intimacy in God's love is the ultimate answer to violence." *LS*, p. 277. Italics in the text.

the truth about ourselves in order for the human spirit to be transformed after the pattern of Christ. God desires this for everyone. When we stand before God and gaze into the face of Jesus Christ, as if in a mirror, God's Spirit will mediate our true identities, gently or aggressively – but always gracefully and lovingly – removing the masks from our faces. God will remove the façades, one by one. God will strip away the masks we have developed since infancy, which cover up who we truly are and hinder us from love. The Spirit is grieved when we find ourselves trapped behind these masks, enslaved to illusion. The God of Jesus Christ is not a God of masks and illusions, but prefers unveiling and truth. And only truth can set us free. We know this freedom when we gaze into the face of Christ in the intimacy of prayer – without our masks – and we are seen and loved for who we really are. All of this is the framework of Paul's profound description of the Christian experience, of which Loder's work is a creative variation on an old truth that is always new: "Now the Lord is Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:18)"

The Holy Spirit moves in love and for love in order for humanity to live in love and for love. Conviction is then understood as an extraordinary act of God's love who longs for human freedom from self-deception, so that the human spirit can be free *for* God, *for* the world, free to be *for* the *Thou* met in one's neighbor.²⁰³ Loder sees love as "not merely an ethical norm, nor is it the disposition to do good, or a work of the human will. . . ." These understandings of love are not profound enough and will never meet the deepest needs of the human spirit, because the human spirit craves relationships. Instead, the love of which Loder speaks "is alive in the person through the spirit of the person in communion with the Spirit of God."²⁰⁴

The comprehensive framework of Loder's relational phenomenological pneumatology is the generative power of love. "What is a lifetime?" and "Why do I live it?" The answer to these questions is grounded in what Loder calls "the immense love of God." It is the only framework to answer these questions. This is how Loder puts it:

If asked from within the love of God mediated to us by his Spirit through Christ, then an answer is forthcoming: My life is an incomplete act of God's immense love toward God's creation; it is an act that is completed only as I return with my lifetime that same love to God and to God's creation. "Why do I live it?" I live it because this love redefines life itself for me; in the *koinonia*, life becomes love. There, life itself is reenvisioned and redefined as the struggling raw material from which love is fashioned by the grace of God.²⁰⁵

²⁰³Kierkegaard, pp. 55ff.

²⁰⁴LS, pp. 276-277.

²⁰⁵LS, p. 278.

Throughout Loder's writings is a passionate desire that women and men come to know themselves as loved by God – even unto death. It is really that simple, and yet so profound – “that the universe is the obverse side of God's immense love for humanity and for each singular individual.”²⁰⁶

We are created for intimacy with God and the human spirit will not be satisfied until that longing is met.

When the longing for that intimacy is satisfied by the Spiritual Presence of Christ, the Face of God, then the answers to our basic questions may dawn on us. A lifetime is an unfinished act of God's love; it is intended that we complete that act by returning ourselves to God, directly and through others, in love. In this recognition, we discover that the fundamental data about us are not merely that we are alive and developing, incredible products of a vast expanding universe. Rather, as each life unfolds, gets torn open, stripped of its survival techniques and its passing pleasures, and discovers itself as spirit, then it appears from under the surface that we have been created for nothing less than the pure love of God, whose universe is our home.²⁰⁷

Stressing the incompleteness of human life is in keeping with the relational-personalism that we have seen throughout his writings. Human life becomes authentically human when it is transparently grounded in Holy Spirit. Within the context of encounter, the human spirit is brought to life and in freedom (in “letting be”) is allowed and invited to respond to God and creation with one's life. How this is done will be unique for every individual, particular to one's personality. The result is a creation that is marvelously diverse, which God loves with particularity.

In seeking to grasp the significance of his own convictional experiences, Loder's work conveys the important point that what God did in his life is no different from what the Creator Spirit can do and is doing with and for every human life willing to risk intimacy with the Holy. Loder believed that what he experienced was neither unique nor rare. He holds out the promise that the God he encountered can be encountered by any one. He used his life as a framework through which one might come to discern the movement of the Spirit of Christ in their own life. The transformational pattern of the Spirit is at work in people's lives – both in and beyond the church – whether they know it or not. This is what the church needs to relearn, so that the church can help individuals discern what God is doing in their lives, to help them know that God has reached out to them in Christ and reaches now through Christ's Spirit with extraordinary love.

Finally, the *telos* of love leads to doxology. This is Loder's ultimate aim all along - to renew a sense of wonder before life itself and the glorification of God. Conviction will result in praise and adoration. “The destiny of [the Spirit's] regenerative work is a sanctifying unity with Christ in worship

²⁰⁶LS, p. 278.

²⁰⁷LS, pp. 342-343.

and in his ongoing redemption of the world.”²⁰⁸ The “aim of all theological writing” is to “inspire worship.”²⁰⁹ Good theology is always doxological. In time, this will also be the ultimate test of Loder’s theology: will it advance our capacity to worship “in spirit and in truth (John 4: 23-24)”? I believe it does and it will. Loder’s work is a loud call to worship, a summons to enter into the intimacy of prayer,:

*Veni, Creator Spiritus,
Mentes tuorum visita;
Imple superna gratia
Quae tu creasti pectora*

*Qui diceris Paraclitus,
Altissimi, donum Dei,
Fons vivus, ignis, caritas,
Et spiritalis unctio.*

*Infirma nostri corporis,
Virtute firmans perpeti;
Accende lumen sensibus,
Infunde amorem cordibus.*

*(Come, Creator Spirit,
visit our souls,
fill them with grace,
Thou, that didst create them.*

*Thou, that art called Comforter,
highest gift of God,
living fount, fire, love
and unction of the spirit -*

*Endow our weak flesh
with perpetual strength,
kindle our senses with light,
pour Thy love into our hearts.)*

Torrance wrote, “*Come Creator Spirit*, is a prayer of open surrender to the absolute creativity of God.”²¹⁰ As Loder’s work leads us into prayer, may the Christian be open to the *new* things the Spirit longs for us to know: The creative power of God’s redeeming love in Christ is even now through his Spirit renewing humanity and the world. *Veni, Creator Spiritus. Come, Creator Spirit. Come.*

²⁰⁸ TTM2, p. 115.

²⁰⁹ James E. Loder, Foreword in Cullen I. K. Story, *The Fourth Gospel: Its Purpose, Pattern, and Power* (Shippensburg, PA: Ragged Edge Press, 1997), p. viii.

²¹⁰ Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (London: SCM Press, 1965), p. 245.

Conclusion

In these chapters I have introduced and examined, explored and deciphered the theology writings of James E. Loder. I have shown that the ideas and themes found in his writings form an epistemological, psycho-spiritual framework that I characterize as a *relational phenomenological pneumatology*. Grounded in his interdisciplinary work in theology, psychology, and physics, Loder seeks to demonstrate how the Holy Spirit is operative in and with the human spirit in establishing new perceptions of reality that are Christomorphic. I have argued that his multidimensional phenomenology, his identification of the logic of transformation in convictional experiences, and his elevation of the importance of relationality in our understanding of the way the Holy Spirit communicates with the human spirit offer an enriching vision of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Thus, I have argued Loder's relational phenomenological pneumatology contains rich and principally unrecognized resources for providing new frameworks for the Christian life.

In these chapters I have provided an overview of his life, explored his writings and their wider reception, and identified the key influences upon his thinking. I have examined all the major themes and terms that Loder uses throughout his writings. I have argued that Loder's theology cannot be fathomed apart from his own experiences of conviction. Loder's life models a relationality that is integral to the Christian life. Making the connection between his life and his thought, in a way that has not been previously explored, does not reduce the intellectual sophistication of his thought, but strengthens its wider appeal because it emerges from within his own existential struggle before the Holy and thus has the power to speak a powerful word to the human condition struggling for meaning and love. The main thrust of Loder's ideas is really very simple, that the vital nerve of the Christian life is living transparently in the presence of God. But this is far from simplistic.

The Christian life is preeminently relational, distinguished by a relationship with God constituted by Jesus Christ, and sustained by the Holy Spirit. I have demonstrated that for Loder, one's relationship with God takes place in and through the life of the Holy Spirit who operates within a complementary relationship with the human spirit, in what he describes as the *analogia spiritus*: an intimate, transformational interrelation of the Holy Spirit and the human spirit. When the Holy Spirit relates to the human spirit, the pattern of knowing is personal, it is relational. The Holy Spirit, intimately connected to the person and work of Christ, takes up and extends the work begun in the incarnation by enfleshing the presence of Christ in the life of an individual in ways that are transformationally Christomorphic. I have shown that what makes Loder's work unique is the way he articulates a theology of the Holy Spirit that incorporates a firm grasp of the way the self participates in and comes to have a knowledge of itself, the world, and God. It is precisely the logic of this dynamic, I would argue, that has extraordinary implications for the way we articulate the Christian experience.

When the Holy Spirit constitutes a four-dimensional reality for an individual, a new world, a new reality has come into being. This new reality is a place of profound meaning and love. It is the vast,

broad, free space of the Spirit's creation. It is a reality defined by the Presence of Christ, where the Holy Spirit continues to speak to the human spirit with a grammar of presence. Through the revelation of God in Christ, we come to see that historical existence is a field of encounter, an experience of being fully alive in the field of God's grace in a world that is inherently relational. The Christian life becomes the gracious participation in the radically new reality, the New Creation revealed and achieved by Jesus Christ through his historical life, death, and resurrection, the same historical person who remains *person* and whose presence is historically mediated by the eschatologically-oriented transforming power of the Holy Spirit engaging the human spirit.

Consequently, I have shown that Loder's theology has the potential of providing new and promising frameworks for the Christian life that have significant implications for the ministry of the church – a church in a state of crisis. Philip Rieff observed that nowadays “the world is full of tame Christians; in consequence the churches are empty of life, if not of people.”¹ And Sam Keen similarly notes that, “The sanctuary is so seldom filled with vitality and enthusiasm.” The language of “celebration,” “joy,” “hope,” and even “love” are used quite regularly. “But the music drags, and there is no dancing and little radical openness to surprise and change.”² Loder's theology speaks to the present condition of the church and has the potential of revitalizing its ministry. His work helps us to discern between pathological religion that hinders the human spirit and conviction that liberates the human spirit to be engaged with the world in works of love. If the Christian life is constitutively a personal transforming event, then what hinders the Christian life is anything that depersonalizes or dehumanizes the self, anything that hinders a relational encounter with Christ. The Holy Spirit as the giver of life is at work in human lives, renewing, reforming, transforming an alienated creation to its Creator. There is power and vitality in the Holy Spirit, always available to the one in Christ, allowing the Christian to be as radical and risky as the Gospel itself. But the renewal of the church can take place only when the needs of a wider humanity are in mind.

I find it striking that when Loder collapsed and asked for prayer from strangers he was in such a public, secular space – a bank. It is true that everything he wrote, he wrote for the church. But I would also argue that he had another audience in mind, the wider public of God's people. He gave his life in service to the academy by fashioning a theological framework for pneumatology that expressed the “how” of human life revitalized by the Holy Spirit. But I am convinced, and have shown, that his ultimate concern was for the life of *persons* living in an increasingly depersonalized, highly mechanized world, for the ordinary woman and man living – within or beyond the church – becoming increasingly

¹Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith After Freud* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 99.

²Sam Keen, *Apology for Wonder* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 15.

dehumanized by a materialist culture alienated from its Creator. What institution better represents the celebration of materiality than a bank? Yet, it is precisely to the wider *cosmos* (John 3: 16-17), in keeping with Loder's admiration for the Gospel of John, that the love of Christ must be directed.

As the first dissertation written after Loder's death and the only one (to the best of my knowledge) written with a clear and sustained focus upon his life and thought, I offer my contribution to knowledge, a contribution that will hopefully aid others who share the emerging interest in Loder's work. The Templeton Foundation is considering endowing a Loder Lectureship at Princeton Theological Seminary. In the 2002-2003 academic year Princeton Seminary will offer for the first time a year-long doctoral seminar dedicated to Loder's writings. President Thomas W. Gillespie of Princeton recently acknowledged that Loder was probably the most brilliant member of the Princeton faculty. Yet his brilliance hindered many from grasping what he was trying to say, making it difficult to see the extraordinary ramifications of his work for the life of the church. This is *not* to say that what I have offered here exhaustively grasps Loder's thinking (for it does not), but it is a start. Neither is it an exercise in hagiography or hero worship. He had no desire to be anyone's saint or hero. Instead, this work is a flickering flame offering just enough light to move us closer to apprehending the "heavenly vision" that he saw so clearly. What matters most is not *Loder's* vision, but the vision of the One before whom Loder stood convicted.

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